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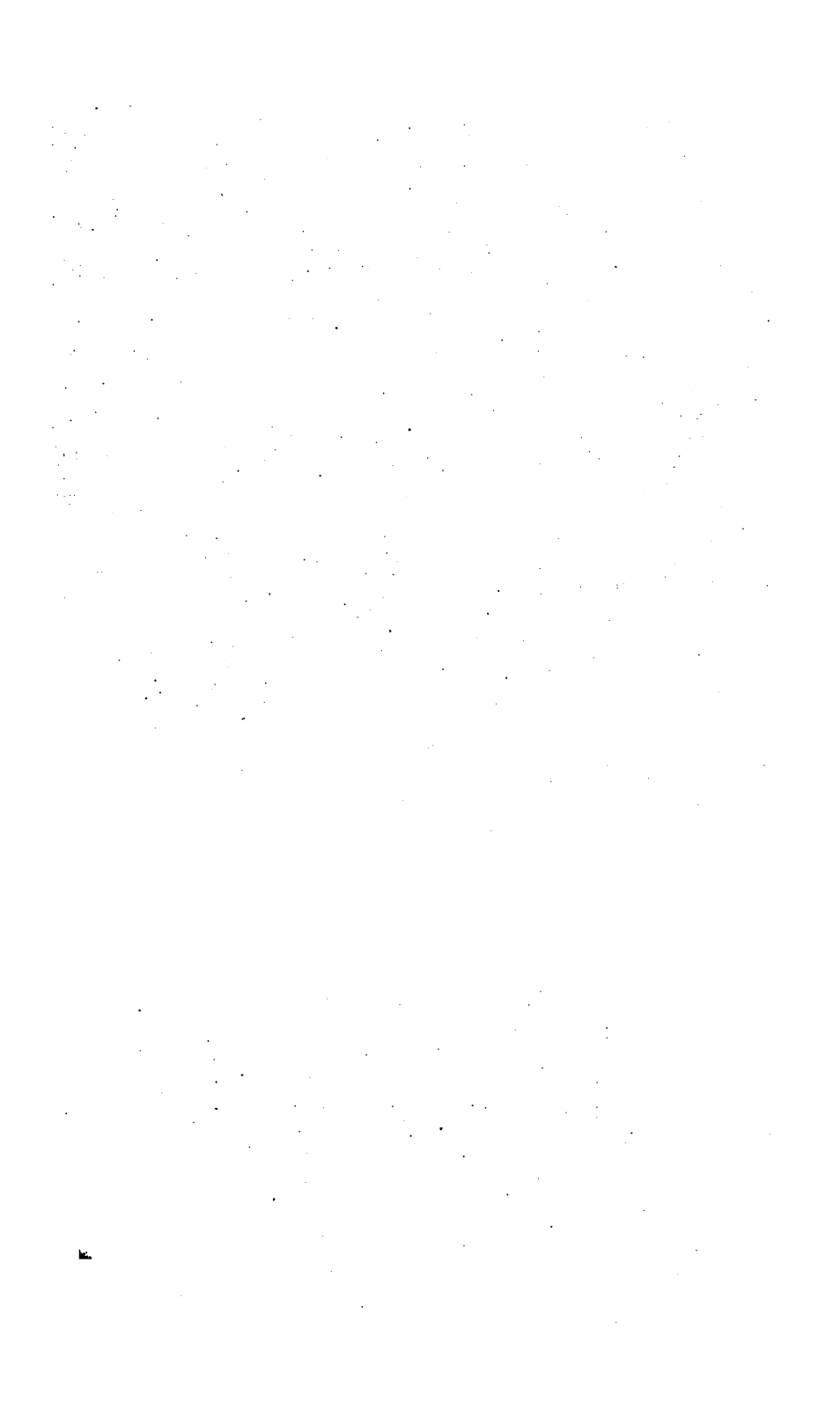
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HOW IT CAME TO PASS;

OR,

SEED-TIME AND HARVEST.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GEORGE SKELTON.

VOL. II.



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HOW IT CAME TO PASS.



CHAPTER XI.

ONE fine morning, about a month later,—was it July or August? I am not quite sure of the date, it is so long ago; but it must have been either the end of July or beginning of August, that Mr. Warfield was crossing Park Lane from the Park into Brook Street, and that he gave the crossing-sweeper half-a-crown.

He had been all unused to London, and to the want of joyous expansion amid grass, and trees and flowers, as also to charity and the melting mood; but here he was in town, and being there, had fled the smoke and houses to get what whiff of freedom and country air might be possible; and so full of benevolence and loving-kindness that they were ready to overflow on any passing object, and descended

in wondrous showers on crossing-sweepers and the like.

All things had gone well with him. When the state of the poll was finally declared, he was found to have even a larger majority than had been expected; and had accordingly been formally declared by the High Sheriff duly elected to serve in Parliament for the Riding, had been girt with the sword, and addressed the electors afterwards amid continuous applause, interrupted only by slight hootings, and terminating, when he concluded, in a complete storm of approval;—an ovation it would be called now-a-days; there had been no hint of a petition, and he was free to rest and be thankful.

And now he had come up to town to take his seat, find a house, and see to the suitable furnishing and fitting thereof, that the casket might be worthy the precious jewel he was to place therein—soon. The wedding was to be in September, so much had been determined; for, as Lady Upton said, “it was a great chance to have her uncle to give Isabel away, and as he was coming for the shooting, it might be managed.” The day remained un-

decided, that it might be made to suit his convenience.

Before coming to town, Mr. Warfield had mentioned the settlements, thinking it desirable to arrange the matter while he was there; but Lady Upton had smilingly waived the subject; saying that as there was to be no dowry, she could not reasonably require anything of the kind, and that really as Isabel was so very young, she would perhaps be quite as well without—more dependent on him;—“she couldn’t be in better hands.” And he had smiled, and thought that if to have every want, and wish, and whim fulfilled, if possible before expressed, were to be in good hands; she could not indeed, and so had let it rest: for of what consequence could it ever be between him and his wife?

He had found a house in Piccadilly, overlooking the Green Park; Nugent House, it was called; and the painters and decorators were already at work; and the upholsterer had received general orders, certain details being reserved for Mr. Warfield’s decision; notably, the fittings of Isabel’s boudoir.

He had also been to “The House,” and, after

the first sensation of strangeness had passed, had found nothing to excite reverence in that assembly of common-place-looking men, which differed from any other assembly of the same class in numbers only. Really he *had* had illusions, and thought that some peculiar wisdom was to be seen in St. Stephen's; he had looked for venerable, intellectual, powerful faces of the type of the old Roman senator; and lo! he found very few heads that equalled his own.

It was a chill—a disappointment. What! had he striven so hardly only to sit among men like these? No, truly, it was for something very different; an ideal of power and wisdom, nay, even of beneficence. And the ideal remained true, but its beauty was less, and its attraction decreased, on seeing the men, the means, through whom alone it could be realized.

Poor, and common-place and trite,—to be carried on little by little, day after day,—are the means leading to the greatest ends in this world of ours; and few are they that have the patient courage so to use them, with the noble faith that, keeping the end ever in view, makes the poor means noble, too. When such an one

is found, the world sees a great man, and makes of him a hero,—or a martyr,—as its whim may be.

But no ideas, political or philosophical,—no thoughts of effort, or struggle, or conquest were in Mr. Warfield's mind; none such had brought him there. He had waked that morning early from blissful dreams—dreams full of Isabel; an Isabel whose deepest woman-nature had been waked, whose soul had been touched to passion; an Isabel whose glorious eyes were veiled by drooping lids that only wooing tenderness could raise and persuade to show the deep, strong love they held; whose soft touch thrilled through every nerve and vein; who was his very own; the depths of whose being answered to his, and said,—“my love, my lord, my life!”

He awoke, and lo! it was but a dream,—a wondrous real and vivid dream, though; a sweet foreshadowing, perhaps, he thought, of the swift-coming future, as he hugged it to his heart, and dwelt upon it, and strove to keep it clear and real in every detail before his eyes. In vain. It was but a dream, and hold it as he might, it slipped and slipped away, and

escaped him and fled; yet leaving in its flight a precious perfume of fair, happy thoughts to the soul it had filled; "thoughts of love and thoughts of longing," that hung about him dreamily, and oppressed him with a certain languor, which chased all hardness out of face and figure, and softened the rapid motions into slow gentleness: this it did for him as it fled away itself for ever.

He opened his window and inhaled the air, to which, even in the great City, the morning brought some touch of freshness; he looked up to the bright blue sky, with only here and there a little white, fleecy cloud; he heard the sparrows chirp and saw a light cart filled with plants in flower, pass along the street; then his eyes wandered to the houses opposite, the houses on each side, the endless houses spreading on and on, all filled with human creatures; and the wilderness of houses, the great multitude of men so near, soon to be poured in restless, surging tides in the street before his eyes, and in other streets, and lanes, and roads innumerable, weighed on him; hampered and stifled him.

He drew a long breath. "Phew," he

thought, "these heaps of men, how pestilent they are! I have always thought that so-much-quoted and admired line of Cowper's,—

"God made the country and man made the town,"

but a poorish sort of twaddle; for if God didn't make the town He made the men who did; but I feel it to-day. God made the country! Let me get into the country and breathe, away from this crushing mass of reeking humanity, if it be but for an hour!—But I must not neglect my darling's boudoir; I am to meet the men at twelve.

"Well, I can go to the Park, it will be better than nothing,—there won't be many creatures there yet; and it will be an escape from these perpetual houses."

So he went to the Park, an almost solitary walk. An early maid was washing down steps here and there, a milkman carrying his shining cans, a seamstress hurrying to her work; and that was all. The very crossing-sweepers had not yet established themselves, and the beggars were still ensconced in their easily-earned beds: it was, for London, a solitude.

When his feet were on the grass, under the

trees, he breathed more freely and slackened his pace; sauntering idly from place to place, weaving happy fancies. Then, these fancies came so fast, and were so bright and beautiful, he wanted to give himself to them wholly;—even the slow, aimless walk, was too great an interruption; and he threw himself on the grass under a large, spreading tree, and looked up at the sky between its branches, and the soft air played on his up-turned face and brought him the sweetness of the flowers; and the awakening stir of the vast city reached him only as a distant, murmuring hum; and he lay there in the great Babylon, alone; in a precious bit of the country that God had made; weaving still those thick-coming fancies,—painting pictures heavenly-fair; with a smile upon his lips and eyes—now raised to the clear blue above, now shut to keep out *all* external sights—while he looked at those pictures of wonderful, sweet beauty.

What did he think of, dream of? Life, and love, and home. Life,—strong, great, glorious; drawing its highest inspirations, finding its best reward and blessing, in a true, happy home;—a home, garnished, and lightened, and filled by

love; gay, laughing, deep, tender, many-sided, ever-changing love; that still should *never* change, never fade, never grow old; that should never die; but, when the tyrant, Death, had shortly worked his will on its frail tenement, should still live; nay, rise to a higher, stronger life—eternal, immortal, invisible—and live and grow for ever and for ever, when time should be no more; through endless worlds, and systems of worlds, beyond the farthest ken.

Awful in their wondrous number and vastness are these same worlds; grand in their majestic, harmonious order; still but blind, senseless matter, moulded unconsciously to the Almighty Will; not worth, in all their immensity, one single, living soul. And shall not these be precious in His sight?

He looked up to the heavens and thought of this great, sweet love growing, ever growing; wondered where in the wide universe he and Isabel should meet, and what they would be, and think and feel; then, how this speck of earth would look to them there; and if they would remember all its beauty and sadness, its joys, and sorrows and despairs; or, if they would all be swept away clean out of mind, and only

the mighty love remain,—steadfast, immovable; in eternity as in time, in heaven as on earth.

And then he sighed and drew back, baffled before these mysteries, outside whose gates wait alike the wise and foolish, the hopeful and despairing; which open not to the deepest thought, and are beyond the flight of the most soaring soul. She may rise higher, higher, higher; and dream dreams, and see visions of great beauty, and delude herself with fancied glimpses into the unknown mysteries: but dreams, visions, fancies, illusions, are they all. The gates open not; she cannot reach their summit; there is no resting place in the great void, no ground on which to steady herself, even one little moment, and poise for another flight. And so she drops down, perforce, poor soul! weary, disheartened, beaten, to her only refuge—the earth: the more weary, and worn and baffled, the higher she has soared. Nay, she is sometimes sadly bruised and hurt by her long, hopeless fall; and can find neither healing nor rest on plain mother earth, after her visions of wonderful, unutterable things; and so she soars and falls again, and yet again; and pines, and struggles and moans; yea, even till the house of her

earthly tabernacle is dissolved, and she finds her home behind those awful gates; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Mr. Warfield had not soared very high, and he returned with a feeling of rest and comfort to the earth—his home; though not without a sigh for the hopelessness of the mysteries he quitted. Still it was pleasant to recur to something tangible, real; to years of positive, human happiness, to be looked for in this present world; this world, that is so bright, and fair and full of promise for the young, and rich and beautiful: and they two, together, would be all three! And then he painted his pictures, with every accessory of colour, and light and shade; with all things fair and beautiful in foreground and in background; in all fantastic, airy, graceful, pensive moods, he painted them: and they all were—Isabel.

There was a picture of her on her wedding-day—so soon to come. In pure white robes, like her white soul, she stood in the old country church, among friends and kindred, crowned with orange flowers; her delicate beauty hardly shaded by the flowing, transparent veil. The head was a little bent, and the eyelashes rested

on cheeks just touched with rose, framed in that bright, dark hair. The light, streaming from a painted window, threw a mass of gorgeous colouring behind her, and at her feet; and as it were a halo of pale yellow radiance over her bowed head.

When it was all filled in, he looked at it, and was satisfied. "My bride!" he breathed so low, the whispering winds could hardly catch it to bear to any other ear; and then he looked at it again with a great tenderness in his face, and presently put it away for awhile, and began upon another.

This was on the sea shore;—Isabel had said she should like to go there;—and he drew his landscape first. A wide expanse of pale, clear, blue water, with a silver sheen, swelling in gentle undulations towards the sands, and there breaking in a fringe of tiny, rippling, white waves; bounded by a distant range of grey clouds, that might be snow-capped mountains; the very silvery shimmer of the sun on distant snow, is on their rounded tops. In front the yellow sands; to the right a chain of rocky hills, cut clear against the high, blue sky; to the left, indented cliffs stretching far, far away;

out at sea, white-sailed ships; nearer home, a little, heaving boat; and on the edges of the water, over the curling foam, sea-birds darting, dipping and diving. Two human figures, no more, were on the sands. A girl in light, simple, morning dress, wearing a little straw hat, had half turned from the lovely view before her, and was looking with soft, tender eyes, into a face that was bent over her; the face of the man on whose arm her hand rested. The little waves curled almost to her feet, the birds wheeled fearlessly about her head, the fresh breeze brought the strong sea's strength to her, and made the blood dance merrily in her veins and colour brightly the delicate, fair skin. He looked at this, and sighed; a long, sweet sigh, that had no touch of sadness; and again he whispered to the winds—"My wife!"

He dwelt long on this, and was loth to let it go; but that brain of his was in a busy mood, and would be painting new ones. So he went on. Drawing for a time many rapid sketches:—of ball-rooms, where reigned a queen; of firesides and tea-tables, of a little boat floating on a lake, of a seat by a waterfall, of the great dining-room at Warfield Chase, of the new

Conservatory he was building, of Isabel's boudoir; but one face, one figure, was in them all; they were but frames for Isabel. Long he lingered over the last, the boudoir, and filled it with many a fair picture, at some of which he smiled, and at some the blood rushed into his dark face, whence it retreated slowly. At length a smile, still sweeter than all the rest, settled on eye and lip, as he looked at his last picture.

A fair woman this, a little older, a little graver, in white again, but trimmed with fluttering rose-ribbons, who looked into the same face as on the sands, looked with glad, humid eyes, and kept her hands still on the treasure she had given him, not daring to trust it to him quite.

Another whisper for the tireless winds that bear so many:—"My child's mother, and my child!"

And then he looked into the heavens again, and wondered, and then he rose and went his way. Had he been there seconds, minutes, hours? He knew not; but it was enough; the restless feeling had risen in him again, and he needed motion; but motion among the trees

and grass and flowers, away from the obtrusive crowd; alone with his great love and coming joy.

So he wandered aimlessly hither and thither, watching the sunbeams that wandered, too; and the flitting butterflies, and the rustling branches of the trees. Then he found himself by the water, and stood and looked on its rippling, glancing surface, and saw a feather floating on it, and watched it driven onward and whirled about, and driven on again until at last it was at rest, left stranded on the bank; and then there was a toy boat, with tiny white sail, bearing the hopes of the little man who pulled it along; and *his* hopes came safe to land, trusting to neither wind nor tide nor skill of oar, but held ever by a good, stout string; and then there was another boat, almost a toy, too, rowed by a bigger little man, and this boat, unlike the other, seemed doubtful of its course, and rolled dangerously sometimes, and made wonderful broken curves, and then darted on again right ahead; and Mr. Warfield watched it, first with a lazy, half interest, afterwards with keen animation; he had been so steeped in the world of fancies that they came naturally to him now,

and as he looked he staked his hopes upon the wavering boat ; as was its fate, so should be his. Ah ! it is over ! No, it rights once more, and again plays its peculiar pranks.

Still he watched it.

“Look out there, young’un !” shouts a voice from the bank, “or you’ll have more water than you like.”

The warning, like many another, caused the catastrophe.

A sudden start, a jerk, a wildly waving oar, and boat and boy were struggling in the water.

Mr. Warfield dashed along the bank, all fancies fled, towards the spot ; but ere he reached it, the boy was safe on land, frightened, not hurt ; and only the boat remained to fish for.

He saw so much, and shook the lad by the hand, and gave his rescuer a sovereign ; and walked away, smiling at his own fancies, restored by the shock to the every-day world. “Still,” he thought, “if even it *had* been ominous he was saved ;”—“yes,” said an inner voice, “but his boat went down, and with it his hopes and pride !” “Pshaw ! I am mooning into imbecility ; back to the world for this time :—but it has been delicious.” And he

turned away, and cut across the grass, to go out by the gate at the top of Brook Street.

A little urchin fell down and roared before him, and he picked him up and put him on his legs, and fairly laughed at the round face of wonder, with the half-uttered cry stopped on the open lips, that looked up at him. A thin, pale, shabby woman sat leaning against the trunk of a tree, holding a baby,—he dropped a coin at her side, as he passed by; a dog rushed between his legs,—and he did not try to kick it; a hoop followed after,—and he laughed again, and caught it, and restored it to its rightful owner; being thereupon pronounced by two splendid nursemaids to be “the perlitest of gentlemen they ever did see!”—and rewarded by the little lady, its owner, with a smile so bright and winning, that he stooped and took a kiss in payment:—*was* it Mr. Warfield, or another in his likeness? And finally, when he crossed the road, he smiled on the sweeper and gave him half-a-crown, because—he couldn’t help it! He was in the mood to rain gold, and joy, and peace on all the world.

Ah! why did not some poor, starving creatures in that great Babylon know it, and find

themselves on his path, that glorious, blessed, happy day; when his heart was full of faith and love, and he had forgotten that there were such things as treachery, and evil, and wrong; forgotten the ingrained principles of his judgment; forgotten all the whole, long, laborious teachings of his life!

The man looked at the coin half in doubt, then up at Mr. Warfield, who smiled again; then he touched his hat and said, "Thank ye, my lord; it ain't often as I gets the like."

The eyes of a woman, who was passing, fell on the piece of money, too; and rested there an instant, wistfully.

She was a thin, shabby woman, with poor, worn garments, that tried to look respectable but failed, and hung about her limp and used; and with no faintest touch of freshness from the faded, black bonnet to the patched boots; a woman who would have been sadly out of place in that neighbourhood of wealth and ease, supposing that any misery *could* be out of place anywhere in London; yet with something of the lady lingering about her still. Involuntarily her eyes had fallen on the coin; she withdrew them quickly, while a sudden flush

dyed the pale hollow cheeks, and, seeking a resting-place, they found Mr. Warfield's face.

There was a look of wonder, of doubt, of certainty; she gave a faint, gasping cry, and stood still; pale and trembling. Then the blood rushed into her face, and she hurried after Mr. Warfield, with quick, eager feet; soon she was on a line with him.

"Gerald!" she said.

He turned and looked at her, startled by something strangely familiar in the tone of the voice; but it must have been a mistake, a fancy, he had never seen the woman before, no never;—he was sure!

"What do you want?" he said: "Money, I suppose. That's not the way to get it. Though how you should have pitched on the right name, is more than I can tell. However, you look a poor wretch enough;—here, take it, and be off."

And out came another half-crown.

But the woman's hand did not move forward, it still held the shawl round her; and she stepped on by his side, struggling to master the choking sobs that filled her throat, and would not let her speak.

"Hang it!" he said, "take it or leave it; but be off, or I shall call the police!"

"Gerald," she said again; and again was stopped. Then with infinite effort she forced down the sobs, and continued, "Gerald, don't you know me?"

He looked at her sharply now, and a vague perception dawned in his eyes, but was angrily stifled, and its expression driven back.

"No, I don't," he said, with angry impatience; "I suppose you are mad or drunk. Leave me, will you? You had best!"

"Gerald, I am Mabel. We played together sometimes, long ago. Once you went up the chestnut-tree by the library window, to get me a flower I wanted, and papa said that if you let yourself be made such a fool of, you would soon be a mere slave to my whims;—don't you remember? *I am* your sister, and we are very poor;—help us."

He knew her now, and looked full at her; first into her eyes; then, slowly, over all her shabby dress, with a cold, curious stare.

She winced under it; even before he spoke she winced, and looked up at him piteously.

"You *must* be mad," he said. "I have

only one sister, and she is at home,—and does not look like *you*! Here, take your money, and go!”—and he offered it to her again, with a look of bitter mockery in his eyes, which acknowledged the truth his tongue denied. But her hand never moved. Then he threw it on the pavement, and walked on faster. She followed.

“Gerald, have some mercy; he is ill—very ill; but if you would only help us for a while till he is better; he will get money some day, for he is clever and works very hard. *Do* help us, Gerald, we are so very poor.”

“Woman, I tell you I don’t know you. Go!”

“I won’t!” she cried, passionately, “not till you say you will help us. We are almost starving. I left him at home hungry—do you hear?—*hungry*!—and cold and ill; and you *shall* help us. O, Gerald! we are children of one mother; don’t say you don’t know me, *don’t* say it again!”

He stopped and turned on her, and they stood face to face; the brother and sister,—the handsome, well-dressed gentleman, and the

poor, shabby, worn woman; but hardly any one noticed them, even with a passing glance; people are used to strange sights in London.

He stood and spoke in a hard, low voice of concentrated passion.

Her last words had been, "Don't say you don't know me, don't say it again."

"I won't," he said; "If you *will* have it, hear. I *do* know you, and the sight of you makes me loathe the light! I *do* know you; you fled from your father's house in shame, and left shame for us behind you—"

"Stop," she said, "stop! not that, Gerald, no shame. I was married the day I left home."

"Shame!" he repeated, setting his teeth hard, "Shame and disgrace! You fled like a thief, in the night. You died to us, and we counted you dead, and buried your memory out of mind. Would to God you had never come to light! But it shall do you no good, this rising to torture me; you chose your lot, and you shall keep it. Never will I own you as sister of mine,—never give you one penny of the money I would scatter freely on any *other* beggars that crossed my path! Starve,

rot, die in a ditch!—it will hurt me no more than *that!*” and, as he spoke, he set his heel on a passing insect and ground it on the stone.

She shivered. “God forgive you, Gerald! You are harder than the stones. After all, I will go home thankful not to be your wife, nor you! *He* wouldn’t hurt a living thing,—and I am not ashamed, no, I am proud of him!”

“Proud of him!” and he laughed scornfully, “a fitting subject for pride, truly! A sneaking cur that prowled in a man’s grounds and stole—”

“Stop!” she said again, in an imperious voice that *would* be heard, “he is an honourable gentleman and a true man; and I *am* proud of him,—and what I did I don’t repent. I was driven to it, and never should if there had been love or mercy in all that wretched house that ought to have been home. We were starved, yes, starved for want of love, and when it came to me could I refuse it? *Could* I? No more than the panting wretch who breathes out his life on the burning eastern sands could turn from the offered cup of pure, cold water.”

“Well, Madam, the cup *was* offered; you took it;—drink it!”

“I will, and with a thankful heart; be the dregs what they may! And they have been bitter, very bitter! When I came out of our one room this morning, and left my husband alone and cold, even in this heat, from illness and want, to take home my work;—I earn six-pence a day;—I almost repented, but now I am thankful! You and your words recall the weary, joyless, frozen years. Better be starved in body, than in soul and spirit. If part of us must die, let it be that! Gerald, I pity you! Farewell.”

Still she stood, and her eyes lingered on his face; after all, he was her brother, and the familiar features called up forgotten scenes of childhood and youth; of a boy and girl who had *sometimes* met, and talked, and played; so she stood and gazed on him again, wistfully.

He was looking down with set hard eyes, and it was an evil face that was bent on the polished boot, the crushed insect; yet she tried once more, this time more for love of him than for herself.

“Gerald, don’t be so hard, pray don’t. Help us. You will be glad some day. You would not like to read in your paper at breakfast that little Mabel, your sister Mabel, had been found dead of hunger in a garret.” And she, who had forgotten his dress and hers, who was with him once again in the home that was his and hers, his sister, laid a hand covered with a shabby glove—can anything be shabbier?—on his arm.

He started, as though he had been stung, and shook it off, and lifted a white face, and looked down upon her.

“How dare you! Didn’t I tell you I should care no more than I care for this?”—and again he touched scornfully the crushed insect. “My sister Mabel died years ago, as I told you. It might possibly annoy me to see that Mabel Warfield had died of hunger in a garret—as you say;—happily there is no such danger. If you speak the truth”—a slight gesture on her part tried to interrupt him—“O, I believe you! a Warfield would hardly *lie*! It is the truth, and there is no Mabel Warfield; therefore the picturesque ending you describe would be under another name. Then, what is it to me?

What *can* it be? Supposing I *do* read in the *Times* some morning—and it would be a mere accident, for I don't read the half of it;—but suppose I *do* read that Mabel Vernon died of starvation,—what then? And yet, I mistake; it *will* be something to me after all;—a relief! I shall know that I am no longer liable to be stopped in Brook Street, or elsewhere, by a shabby woman, who is mad!”

“You know my name, then? Thank God I am Mabel Vernon! I hope you never will read the news you hold so lightly now, for your sake more than mine; you need not wait until that time for the relief you speak of; I shall stop you no more. But if you ever *do* read it, remember I forgave you, and said at the last, ‘Good bye, Gerald, God forgive you too!’”

She turned away now, and went back swiftly. He, too, went on his way, and, looked not back with any lingering touch of pity; no, not once. If he had he might have seen that after walking a little way she stopped suddenly, looked quickly round, then with a flush walked on again;—after a few more steps, turned and rapidly retraced them,—stooped in a corner by some area railings: and picked up half-a-crown. It was

hard to do, but might it not be life to him who lay helpless at home, and what would she not do for him? Strange that she should have the chance to do it, that it had not been picked up, even in those few minutes; so strange as to make her think it was provided by Him who feeds the young ravens when they cry; and who shall say it was not? So she took it from His hand, and bought food and fuel, and comforted her husband therewith, and was thankful.

If he had turned and seen her pitiful face and ways would he have relented? The knit brows, and the face that looked so steadily and sternly right before him, gave no signs of it, nor did the strong, firm tread. Not half an hour had passed since he left the park; the sun still shone, the sparrows chirped, and the children and dogs basked happily in its warmth, but he knew it not; for him the light had faded, the joy passed, the day was dead.

Bitter, black despair, had come upon him, and entered into him, and driven out his pictures and his fancies, his hopes and dreams. That loathed, forgotten past, had risen from the grave, where he had hoped to bury it for ever, and stood there before him, under his

eyes, and he could not flee it, could not turn away; it held him, and made him look. There stood his sister, bodily in the flesh, of his own blood; his sister who had shamefully fled, despite a rigorous seclusion and care; then came his father, almost as real, and his words on the day when he had heard of this same flight, rang in his ears as though a voice had uttered them—"Never, as you value either, give your honour or your happiness into the keeping of a *woman!*" They rang in his ears again, and yet again; and then came rushing after them, wave on wave, sneers, and arguments and contempts; distorted facts and merciless deductions; they all came rushing on, uttered by that same cold, biting voice; and worst, and bitterest and most hopeless, that story of the woman who had been his mother!

As the terrible array stood there menacing, impalpable, impregnable, his heart died within him; but he roused himself, and struggled against them, and fought for his life; and made fierce, wild efforts to get away; but on every side they hemmed him in, he could not baffle them, nor conquer them, nor find a way to escape; there they were. And they took his

joy and turned it to inner wailing, his hope to fear, his faith to doubt, his happy life to a great, suffering despair!

He walked on rapidly, looking neither to the right nor left, right on over the crossings, getting busy now, regardless of men and horses, life and limb; and more than one animal was pulled up with its head close upon its shoulder, and loud and angry were the curses that followed him. But he heeded not, heard not, knew not; on he went, and up into his room, and flung aside his hat and gloves, and threw himself heavily into a chair, and covered his face, and groaned.

Five minutes passed, and he still sat there without sign or movement, when there came a tap at the door.

At once he sat upright, and wore a smooth, calm face; he felt as if some dreadful news were coming to him, anything else would be unnatural, and he braced himself to meet it like a man.

But it was only a waiter come to inquire about breakfast. As Mr. Warfield answered him, the man's eyes turned to the table, and Mr. Warfield, following them, saw that there

was a letter. When he was alone again, he went and took it up listlessly, then flushed deeply as he read the address, written in a half-formed, girlish hand :—

“Gerald Warfield, Esq., M.P.,
“Black’s Hotel,
“St. James’s Street,
“London.”

He looked at it long and sadly, and felt that had he not been a man he must have cried for pity of himself and her. Then he took it to his chair and sat down again, and waited yet a little while before he opened it, and read,—

“DEAR MR. WARFIELD,

“I was so pleased to get your nice long letter, and hear about your doings in London. I am quite sure I shall like the house, it is delightful to think we shall be able to see grass and trees; I don’t think I *could* like a house very much if we could not see anything from it but other houses. Your description of Parliament made me laugh so much; how funny some of them must look! as funny as Mr.

Bunton; it did not sound at all as if they were the wise, grave, old men, I thought they were; though I knew, of course, they were not all old.

“Flora came the day you left; she said she must make the most of the time while the dragon was away. Was it not absurd of her? Do you know I really believe she is jealous! but she was very nice, and I spent Wednesday with her and Miss Millicent; and it was like old times. And when we were sitting in the library, because it is the coolest room, and we were all so knocked up with the heat we could hardly speak, Major Delisle and Sir F. Popham called; and they came in, looking quite cool and comfortable. I should not have thought they could be alike in anything,—but they are in that; they made us feel quite fresh. And they said it was always the same,—because we were surprised;—and they never *did* feel either heat or cold much. And why they came together I don’t know; but I fancy Major Delisle found Sir Frederick was coming, and came with him. And he had his dog—Sir Frederick, I mean,—the queerest little dog, and *so* ugly; and he thinks him a *beauty*! But he is,

oh, so clever! and his name is Mustard. And do you know, it was very wicked of me, but I could not help it, when he was standing up, begging,—he has ever so much long hair about his face, and hardly any legs;—and Sir Frederick was standing by him, pulling his whiskers—his hair is nearly the same colour;—I thought how like each other they were: and it made me laugh disgracefully; but, luckily, they thought it was all at Mustard;—only Sir Frederick's legs are long,—of course I did not mean that. And he can walk on two legs—Mustard, I mean—and looks, oh, so wise! He would make anybody laugh, so it was not surprising. I hope you will see him some day,—he is so very funny.

“On Thursday I asked Harry to take me to see Farmer Brown; and he did; and they were so pleased. The farmer said he had been looking for me, because I had said I would come, and I wasn't one to forget; and Mrs. Brown seemed as if she could not do enough for me. She said she had heard there never *was* such a speech as the farmer's; and it was all my doing: and she was so proud of him, and there wasn't his math in all Yorkshire! But she scolded him directly

afterwards, when he was coming in without wiping his boots! And when we were coming home, Harry was so good! He drove me round right through the Moors, and it was delicious; and we saw the dearest little house standing quite on the Moor amongst the heather: Hope Cottage they call it; and I got out and looked at it. And there is a little garden with roses, and it looks down into a valley with a brook at the bottom; and then there is a hill on the opposite side. But it is all moorland; and oh, so beautiful! with the heath and bilberry wires (the bilberries are almost ripe, it has been so hot); and the ferns down by the water, and the water plashing gently over the stones. I thought how nice it would be if you were not rich, and we might live there all by ourselves, with Pearson and Bob; but of course that is absurd, I know.

“And dear Harry is so kind again. Oh! I hope you will be good to him and have patience. He goes so much to the Barracks now, and mamma does not like it; and I am afraid he spends a great deal of money; and though he ought to have it, he hasn't; and I don't know

how he gets it. Please try to help him when you come back.

"I was walking in the Wilderness this morning, and it was *so* delightful; there was a delicious breeze off the hills, just like that last morning before you went away; do you remember? And I wished you were there. I hope you won't be obliged to stay away much longer.

"I have been reading my letter, and am ashamed to tell you such trifling things; but you know you told me, when I said I should have nothing worth writing about, that I was to say just what came into my mind, as if I were talking to you; and I have done so. So I hope you won't think it *too* foolish. Do you think you could find some nice new kind of flower for Flora in London? I should be so pleased.

"Good bye, and please come back as soon as you can.

"Yours affectionately,

"ISABEL UPTON.

"UPTON HALL,
Saturday."

Such was the letter. Had he read it before he met his sister, he would have felt glad at heart for the simple, trusting, girlish tone, and laughed joyously at the idea of Sir F. Popham, and his likeness to his dog; but now! ah! *now*, it was another thing. If we would touch the hearts we love, let us pray God our letters may arrive in fitting season; words are so tame and bald, may mean so little or so much, they want the heart's interpreter rightly to tell their story.

He read it through slowly, carefully, and yet could hardly master its simple contents; they seemed so strange, so puerile, so impossible, after his stormy thoughts. He read it again, and the picture of Isabel grew as he read, and spoke the words to him, and they reached his heart, and took possession once again, and chased away, for that time, the evil host he had combated in vain.

"My God!" he cried, "it *cannot* be a lie!"

And he read it yet once more, and smiled again, and folded it carefully like a precious thing, and kissed it, and put it away.

It had helped him, comforted him, restored him for the time; still, he was tired, weary,

dull; the brightness of the morning had fled, and the noon-day was heavy, and held no promise. He went and met the men, and chose the furniture for Isabel's boudoir, as he had arranged; and tried to care about colour, and shape, and fitness, but it was a weariness, and he was glad when it was over.

Alas for him! The serpent had entered into his Paradise, and lay couched among the flowers; still, motionless, carefully hidden by their fresh beauty; but waiting, watching, with poison ever ready, and wanting only the willing ear.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. WARFIELD went through his remaining business in Town as rapidly as possible, in order to get back again to Isabel; the thought of his sister, and all the other wretched thoughts her presence had revived, continued to haunt him, and he felt that his only refuge was with her, his only hope of peace.

So he hastened and fled to her.

And again rolled on some almost happy weeks. In her presence he was as he had been before; doubts and fears came not near him, and he gave them little time elsewhere. Hope grew strong once more, and fear faded and fled. After all, he would escape and be safe. Soon his darling would be with him always, and he would rest; for near her no evil thing could ever come. Meanwhile, he greatly tormented Lady Upton by haunting

her house, morning, noon, and night; and following Isabel's every movement and wish with eager, wistful devotion: it was a bitter sight to her ladyship, and she longed to escape from it, and grew to wish for the arrival of the wedding-day almost as much as Mr. Warfield himself; nay, she would even have welcomed a course of balls and parties, as likely to afford her some relief; but the neighbourhood had exhausted itself in that way, none were offered, and the party at Upton Hall were left very much to themselves.

Flora and Sir Harry had resumed their ill-used airs, and disagreeable ways of proceeding generally, on Mr. Warfield's arrival; and it was in vain that he tried to win Sir Harry's confidence, so as to be able to help and advise him. He was met by chilling coldness, and a tacit distrust and opposition that never yielded; as far as he could, Sir Harry avoided all private meetings, and when they were inevitable, bore them with an air of proud defiance, let Mr. Warfield approach him how he would;—and he was very patient, and tried his best for Isabel's sake. One only thing was wanting. It all *was* trying; he did not care personally

for Sir Harry at all, indeed, he rather disliked him; and so his wisdom, and efforts, and patience were all thrown away; and there, where ignorant Bob had much influence, he had none:—all for want of a little love.

September came, and, with it, Mr. Upton. Then there was a sort of hushed stir about all the house; the servants doubly alert, but moving with quiet feet, and positively trembling if some unlucky door escaped and gave a slam. Sir Harry was out more than ever, and on the rare occasions when he was at home, remained always quiet in his uncle's presence, generally silent, and never made the slightest allusion to his grievances nor appealed to him in any way; not even on the subject of the coveted commission, which had been named to him by Lady Upton on his arrival, and kept him in hourly dread of a scene during the first day or two.

But the days passed, and Sir Harry made no sign; and Mr. Upton settled to his shooting and his dinners with a quiet mind, and congratulated himself, with much satisfaction, on the effectual way in which he had settled that very obstreperous young gentleman. His

peace was broken in upon, as he felt, very unjustifiably, by Mr. Warfield, who, at Isabel's instigation, made an attempt, and a forcible one, to induce him to act. It was met in Mr. Upton's usual cool, polite, hopeless way, with even added determination to do nothing, produced by his natural and just indignation at "another fellow coming to bore him, by Jove!"—which was his mental reflection. He listened, with an exaggerated appearance of languor, though a faint flush tinted his pale cheeks, and puffed lazily at his cigar while Mr. Warfield spoke. Even when he ceased, he left time for a perceptible pause; then said,—

"Finished, my dear fellow?—Yes?—Well, I agree perfectly with all you have said, you couldn't be more right; it would do him no end of good,—take the vice out of him, in fact, and make him fit for harness,—quiet to ride or drive,—as they say of other kicking young colts. And now, may I ask you to spend any further persuasion on Lady Upton? You see it is really thrown away on me, as I am persuaded to the greatest possible extent already; and—it fatigues me." And he laid his head back against the cushions with a gentle sigh.

"Then, Mr. Upton," replied Mr. Warfield, "excuse me, but if these are your opinions, why not act on them? You have the power."

"My dear fellow! *Do* you know Lady Upton? With my nerves! I couldn't go through it, I assure you I couldn't; not for all the commissions and all the boys in Christendom! And really—you will excuse me—on any other subject I shall be too happy to have your conversation, but this—I *must* ask you not to mention it to me again; unless, indeed, you could persuade Lady Upton,—which is not likely. You see, I am so easily upset."

"Pray, forgive me, Mr. Upton. I should never have taken the liberty, but Isabel asked me; and really I think the boy's future is at stake."

"O, pray, no more! I am dreadfully shaken already. I really couldn't bear it."

He sighed again wearily, then added in a plaintive voice,—

"My bag will suffer to-day, as it is, I know; and one of the few things I *do* like is to make a good bag."

Bitter words rose to Mr. Warfield's lips as he looked at the man before him; but, he was

Isabel's uncle, and prudence forced them back. He only said,—

“ I trust you may not suffer so much as you anticipate from our short conversation; you may be very sure that I shall not so offend again.”

Whereupon Mr. Upton bowed his head and smiled feebly; and Mr. Warfield took himself off, and went in search of Sir Harry. His heart was stirred with indignation, and warmed towards the fatherless boy who had such an uncle for guardian and support.

“ The pitiful, selfish cur!” he muttered to himself, “ why the boy is worth a dozen of him, wild as he is.”

And he went to seek him, ready to adopt him, and take him to his heart, and be to him as a father. But the Fates were surely against poor Sir Harry, who would readily have responded to such an appeal; he was nowhere to be found, and before the two met, another of his mad pranks had come to Mr. Warfield's ears, all his sudden warmth had vanished, and the first and last chance of their cordial meeting had passed away unused.

In one respect Mr. Upton had shown most

unusual complaisance; he had consented readily to give Isabel away. She never disturbed him, and her looks and manner gratified his taste,—in a certain sense he really liked her; besides, he felt that she would do him credit. So he consented willingly, and was even magnanimous enough,—he felt it to *be* magnanimous,—to leave the choice of the day to Lady Upton, merely observing, that “of course it must not be in the first fortnight, it was out of the question that he should give up a day then; and it must be understood that he might have to leave about the 20th, or so, if it turned chilly, as it sometimes *would* down there.” So, to make all safe, Lady Upton had taken the first day allowed, the 15th,—and the 15th it was to be.

Very fast fled the days. In a fortnight—next week—to-morrow—they were to be married.

Mr. Upton was lounging in an easy chair, near the open window of the library, preparing, as he said, for the coming fatigues; he was not going out *that* day. On a small table near him were “The Times,” “Punch,” and a French novel; he took up languidly first one and then another; but they seemed to bring nothing but weariness, and he gave it up with a sigh, and

leaned back with shut eyes, an impersonation of weary, helpless, selfish ease.

Lady Upton sat at a little distance writing rapidly. She had had many arrangements to make, and orders to give, for the wedding was to be very splendid, and Isabel's *trousseau* was magnificent; and even yet she found some last things remaining that required attention. She gave an occasional glance towards Mr. Upton, but did not attempt to disturb him.

He sighed again, looked wearily over the landscape, then turned to her, and spoke,—“I suppose those lawyer fellows will be here directly,” he said; “well, it will be a blessing to have it over. Are we to sign to-day?”

“Why, no,” said her ladyship, “you will be spared that trouble, you have nothing to sign.”

“Ah! you mistake, unfortunately, I fear,” replied Mr. Upton; “I believe it wouldn't be legal without my concurrence.”

“Indeed, it is you who mistake me. There is no dowry to settle; there are no settlements at all.”

He sat upright. “Impossible!” he said.

“A fact, nevertheless. Mr. Warfield did not wish for any dowry, and really he is so

rich, it cannot be of any consequence; and of course it will be the better for Harry."

"All that is very well," he said; "but not the slightest reason why there should not be settlements. I am astonished Mr. Warfield should dream of such a thing!"

"Oh! it is my doing; I thought it as well for her not to be independent, she is such a mere child, you know. He was ready to settle anything on her; you must see that!"

"And you have done this, and never told me? Miss Upton is to be married and not have a single penny she can call her own!"

And Mr. Upton was, perhaps, more excited than he had ever been in his life by anything which did not touch him personally; he positively got off his chair and walked up and down the room.

"What possible difference can it make?" answered her ladyship. "Do you not see that he thinks nothing too much for her? and had you made inquiries, I should of course have told you my views at once."

"Excuse me, Lady Upton, but that is simple rubbish. You know I never make inquiries.

And as for nothing being too much for her, why, that's all very well *now*; but, Lady Upton!"—and he stopped opposite to her, and looked her full in the face: "this is a wrong that you have done your daughter. I have never opposed you yet; but this is too much, and I won't put up with it. I refuse my consent."

"O, nonsense! Mr. Upton. It is too late for anything of *that* kind; you have consented."

"Under false impressions. And if she were in church, and I objected, it would not be too late. There *must* be settlements, I say, or no marriage."

"Really, you surprise me!" said Lady Upton, with a curious sort of smile. "But *pray* sit down, you will be over-tired, and let us talk the matter over quietly. Of course if you insist, it must be done; but think of the awkwardness! We should have to put off the wedding, and it is an excellent match, and one never knows what may happen; and he really is very fond of her. Besides, he would, I dare say, do anything you like afterwards."

Mr. Upton, reminded of himself and his

fatigue, returned to his chair, and sat down; and his energy evaporated as suddenly as it had arisen.

"Really," he said, querulously, "it's too bad! People will say it's a shame, and so it is. And you have kept me in the dark till now, when I must either let things go on or make an awful row, and make us all look supremely ridiculous; and you know how I hate rows, and that exertion kills me! It's *too* bad!"

"But, indeed, Mr. Upton," said her ladyship, in an injured tone, "how was I to suppose you cared about the matter? You never asked; and you never before expressed any interest in Isabel's concerns, or any anxiety about them. I naturally thought you would be willing to leave them to my judgment, as you always had done."

"And I *did* leave it to you, like a confounded ass, as I am; but I expected, of course, it would be all right; never dreamed otherwise! A man so much older than herself, and as rich as Cræsus! Why, I thought the settlements would be magnificent!" There was a pause. Presently he resumed,

"But I suppose the thing must go on; after

all, I couldn't stand the bother, I know; but I shall tell that very wise individual, my nephew that is to be, my opinion on the subject. Miss Upton, of Upton Hall, marries a millionaire, and hasn't a penny!"

"You will, of course, act as you think right," said her ladyship in a persuasive tone, "but would it not be as well to wait till after the marriage? It will hardly be a pleasant thing to do, and might be too much for you, with to-morrow in prospect."

"You are right there, it would be altogether too much for me; and I can't be expected to kill myself, I suppose, over the confounded business!—and he does seem awfully fond of her! But I don't like it, Lady Upton, I don't like it! and if ever it turns out badly, they will blame us. Poor child!—and she is so young!"

"The very reason. Why should I want it, if not for her good?"

"I don't know," he said, looking at her suspiciously; "but I don't like it.—I'll go and lie down."

And he went, and as he went his thought was, "But I *do* know; she hates her, the old

vixen, and grudges her her success. If anything decent had been done, looking at his property, Isabel would have been more highly dowered than her mother, nay, actually richer; and her proud stomach couldn't bear that. The reason is not so difficult to find, my lady! By Jove! I'd like to turn the tables on you!—But I really couldn't.—Well, I hope Warfield will do it for me; he may. They say love *does* last sometimes, even the hottest. Heaven knows, I suppose; I'm sure I don't." Here he entered his room.

"Saunders," he said, "draw the curtains, and get me some hock and seltzer water."

When he left the library, her ladyship looked after him and smiled. *Her* thought was, "Well, that is happily over! he will never take the trouble to write or speak of an unpleasant subject, unless it were in the very instant of exasperation; really at one time I almost feared he would prove unmanageable; but it's all safe now, and my lady daughter won't be able quite to queen it over her mother! You've done great things, Miss Isabel," and she smiled again, and a flash of triumph brightened her eyes, "but after all you go to your fine lands and

houses as poor as the meanest kitchen wench ; utterly dependent on your husband's will and whim, and, unless I much mistake, the so adoring lover will make you feel it, too!—in time."

Flora came in ; but Lady Upton did not see her until she had approached quite near, and spoke ; then she started and flushed deeply—she felt caught ; could her thoughts be written on her face ? Perhaps to some extent they were, for Flora after one quick glance, and the very shortest greeting, turned abruptly away, and went in search of Isabel. With her she looked at all the beautiful bridal array, and went into ecstasies over everything ; especially the exquisite pearls Mr. Warfield had brought for his bride ; and was gracious and bright and gay, the very Flora of old times ; and Isabel's laugh mingled with hers, and their young voices made sweet music in Pearson's ears, and gladdened her heart, as they might have done even the saddest of human hearts that still were open to love and sympathy ;—when suddenly, without sign or warning, Flora burst into passionate crying, and hugged and kissed Isabel as if she would never let her go."

"O Isabel, I can't let you go, I can't!" she cried between her tears. "And I've been so wicked to you, so wicked and cruel. But I loved you so, and I couldn't bear him to take you away. Oh! Izzy forgive me—but I *do* hate him!"

"Hush, Flora, dear Flora, don't!"

"Oh! I've done it again! But forgive me, Izzy; forgive me, and I'll go!"

"I *do* forgive you, Flora, with all my heart, if you *will* have it so. But it's nothing in my eyes, nothing! Only *do* try to like Mr. Warfield—for my sake—won't you?" And the eyes pleaded so earnestly.

"I'll do anything in the world for you, Izzy, anything!—and so I'll go now, because you see I don't like him yet, unfortunately, and I'm that horrid sort of creature, I shall be sure to put my foot in it again, if I stay. There now! What would your paragon say to that? No, I will go this minute, and you shan't go with me, not a step, not if you look at me ever so hard.

"Good bye, my darling, good bye; and God bless you!"

And with one last, passionate embrace, she

rushed out of the room and the house, crying like a child, and careless who should see it.

"Bless her, she's a good heart, has Miss Belairs," said Pearson, in whose own eyes the tears were standing; "though, to be sure, she has been a bit cross to you at times; but you see she just couldn't bear to lose you—her and Sir Harry's the same. And no wonder she cries, poor dear: I could cry my eyes out, to think of the house without you, and you all alone amongst strangers;—and so young, poor lamb!"

"Now, nursie! when you know how good Mr. Warfield is to me! And how soon we are coming back! And the beautiful, wide sea, that I have so longed for, and that I am going to see, with him to take care of me. Oh, nursie, how can you talk of crying, when I am so happy!"

"And right to be happy, deary; I'm a silly old woman. that doesn't know what's good. But oh! Miss Isabel, it goes to my heart to part with you; these seventeen years I have seen your sweet face smile on me from its pillow, and never missed a night; and now, to-

night is to be the last! Oh! what shall I do! what *shall* I do!"

And poor Pearson suddenly sat down, and burst out crying too.

Isabel went to her, and put her arms round her, and kissed and comforted her, as she had been used to do when a little child.

"And what shall *I* do without you, nursie? Think how I shall miss you! If you could but go with me!—but there is mamma. And after all, it is but for a month, you know; and then we shall come home again."

"Oh! I know I can't go; I know I can't. My lady couldn't do without me, nohow! But home to me you'll never come no more, my dear young lady—my pretty baby, that I nursed!"

And she burst out again, and sat rocking herself to and fro.

Isabel knelt before her, and clasped her close. "Nursie, nursie," she said, with a quiver in her voice, "don't; you'll make me cry, too; and then just think what my eyes will be like to-morrow, when you say I am to look such wonderful things!"

And a smile very much akin to tears played

over her face. But it produced no answering smile. Pearson threw down her apron, and started up in a fright.

"Oh, don't cry, love, whatever you do," she said, between her sobs; "I shall have done directly. There! I've done now. And it wouldn't be lucky. But, I've something on my mind that I must say this day. Miss Isabel, will you make me a promise?"

"Any thing you'll ask me, nursie, I'm sure I dare promise. Is it to write to you? Because I shall do that whether I promise or not."

"Thank you, my darling. No; it's not that: it's this. I know it sounds foolish now, when you've got all the world can give; but it's a queer place, is the world—full of ups and downs."

"Well, but what is it, nursie? you haven't told me yet."

"Well, if ever it *does* turn out that you *are* in trouble, will you come to me, like you did when you were a little child; will you, my dear?"

"Is that all, nursie? Why of course I will; I always do—if I can find you. But suppose I happen to have the toothache or something,

in town, and you are in the country, am I to ask Mr. Warfield to bring me to my dear old nurse? Wouldn't he think me too great a baby?" And she laughed.

"Eh! child, but it's sweet to hear you laugh like that, though you're turning to fun what I mean for earnest. Well, he's taught you that, at any rate; and he looks at you as if you were gold and rubies; and so *I* ought to be the last to go against your wedding him! And I don't, not really. I'm only just foolish a bit outside, but I'm glad in my heart for your joy. And I hope it 'll last for many a long year! And don't you be afraid, my darling, to be happy; no, be as happy as ever you can. No one's a better right."

"Oh, nursie!"

"Aye, but it's true, though. And what's more—and you can't gainsay that—sunshine as well as rain comes from God above: it's Him that's giving you your pleasure now—doesn't He know best? But, O love! don't forget *Him* in it, nor amongst all the grand doings where you'll be lady and queen!"

"Indeed, nursie, you need not fear that. I

feel that He is my Father, and will take care of me always; *you* forget that, when you say I shall be all alone among strangers."

"I did forget it, love; more shame for me! And He will be there with you, it's truth; for He says He is the Father of the fatherless. But, child, He doesn't promise always to keep His children from trouble, and He doesn't do it, neither. Promise me, in downright earnest, that if real trouble comes, you'll ever come to me."

Isabel's face was very grave, and a look of thought and age, much beyond her years, passed over it. She paused awhile, then answered steadily,—

"In very earnest, dear nurse, I will,—if it is more than I can bear. But, you know, I am to be a woman now, not a child; and I must learn to bear my own burdens."

"And that is all you will promise?" said Pearson, only half satisfied, "well, happen you are right; but I hope that God will make them light, for it's tender shoulders that will have to bear them. And never forget, Miss Isabel, *never*, that, come what may, there will always be one, at least, in this world, ready

and willing to help to carry them, till poor old Pearson is put in the ground and the earth shovelled over her."

"Nursie, I couldn't forget it; how could I? Have I not known it always, all my life? But you really must not talk about being buried; that is not the way to help me, I'm sure. Think, instead, how often I shall come to see you, and how happy I shall be. Nursie, nursie, it's not like you to be so sorrowful when I want to be glad."

"But it is like me, just. I'm a selfish, soft old woman, that's what I am; and I could bite my tongue off for worrying you; but there! I've got your word, and you shall have no more of my croaking, *this* time; I'll put a good face on it, I promise you, and look on the bright side. And time I did, with all these things to fold and pack! A pretty body I am to sit down with my hands before me, and cry! You just go and lie down, my dear, and rest a bit; there's sure to be nobody in the little room off the dining-room, and it's warm there, and I heard my lady say Mr. Warfield wasn't coming till dinner-time to-day."

"There's a dear old nursie! Now you're

good, give me another kiss and I *will* go and lie down;—but couldn't I help you?"

"Bless the child! *You* help me! I'll call Martha, and we'll have it all done in no time; it only wants setting to. Now, don't you bother about me any more," as Isabel still lingered and looked wistfully at her, "*I'm* all right; but go and lie down like a dear, and perhaps you'll even get a sleep, and I'll come for you half-an-hour before dinner."

"Well, I *am* tired, nursie; besides, I must do as I am bid; must I not? But don't forget, and let me be late for dinner."

"*Me* forget you! They say most things can be done if you try hard enough, but I don't think that's one of 'em!" And she laughed, and then Isabel laughed, and went laughing, with a light step and a lighter heart, to the sunny room whose warmth was beginning to be pleasant. There she stood for a minute or two at the window, looking over the lawn, and a dreamy expression stole over her features; then she lay down on the sofa in the sunshine and in two minutes was fast asleep, with the sweet child-smile her nurse knew so well settled on her lips.

Sleep, Isabel, and dream, sweet dreams of tender joy; and God grant that the waking come not too soon! For you look fair as you lie there, sweet Isabel, most fair; and fragile;—as fragile as you are fair.

So; sleep, and dream!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ancestors in the dining-room looked down that day from the old walls and obscure corners of the sombre room—they *were* obscure notwithstanding the blazing lights in its centre—on a brilliant spot which should have been a festive board, if all accessories that can charm eye or palate could have made it one; but they saw no sign of festivity, though it was a wedding eve; nay, the party there assembled were, in truth, only just less silent themselves.

Lady Upton sat at the head of the table, still and stern, eating now and then a morsel for the sake of appearances, and casting an occasional glance towards the door or the vacant seat opposite her; when she would bite her lip, and the spot of crimson on each cheek grow deeper; for Harry had gone out early in the morning, no one knew whither, and had neither been

seen nor heard of since. She was not afraid for him, had no thought of accident nor harm; but that she should be treated with such negligent contempt, and that others should know it, cut her to the quick.

Then came Mr. Upton, who would positively have snapped at any one who should have addressed him, he was so thoroughly out of humour with himself and all the world; so it was just as well that no one thought of speaking to him.

Mr. Warfield, too, was utterly silent; and his face wore a strange, absent, troubled look, which softened and grew tender as his eyes fell now and again on Isabel; but the trouble remained, and he was so self-absorbed as not even to notice the unusual silence.

Isabel did, indeed, make one or two faint attempts at conversation, which fell unheeded; then she also sat silent, looking sometimes towards the door, and then with a deprecating glance towards her mother or Mr. Upton.

Even the servants felt it a relief when the dinner came to an end, and the butler drew a long breath as the party left the room; Mr.

Upton too cross to stay for his claret, and Mr. Warfield wanting no wine that night.

He sat by Isabel while they had a cup of tea, and said a word now and then, but evidently hardly heard the replies; then Lady Upton pleaded a headache, and went away. Whereupon Mr. Warfield gathered himself together and approached Mr. Upton, and tried to talk to him, but found himself so unmistakeably snubbed that he could but retire, which he did, smiling; *that* defeat did not hurt him! and, taking a book, retreated into a dim corner to read; but not the book. It lay open before him, but his eyes were elsewhere. On a fair face, whose happiness was dimmed by a look of wistful anxiety, seen mostly in the eyes, as they turned again and again towards the door—in vain.

He sat and watched her long. First with sympathy; then as the time passed, and her eyes did not seek *him*, with impatience; finally, with anger—almost!

“She has forgotten me!” he thought; “she is thinking only of him! Confound him! I wish he might never come back!”

At that instant, as if to reproach him, her eyes sought him; the pain left them, and she smiled—a happy, trusting smile.

“Shall I play something for you?” she said.

“Yes, do. If it won’t disturb Mr. Upton?”

“O! uncle likes it; don’t you, uncle?”

“Well, I *do* like the things you play generally, Isabel, it’s true; but if you are going to show off with one of those rushing, scrambling, mad-dog performances, that are the rage now-a-days, pray tell me and—I’ll retire!”

O! don’t be alarmed, uncle,” she replied, laughing, “they are a great deal too difficult for me; besides, I don’t like them.”

“Well, suppose you play that thing I heard the other day?”

“The Moonlight Sonata?”

“Yes—or—some of those songs of Mendelssohn’s.”

“Then let it be ‘The Songs,’ Isabel, if you don’t mind,” said Mr. Warfield.

And as she played he came and looked down on her—with eager longing, that yet was half sorrowful; and tumultuous thoughts of hope, and doubt and fear, surged in him, there in the quiet room, listening to the sweet, low music,

and looking at the face he loved;—and would not be lulled. He heard ever the hidden wail that broke out only at intervals; he heard it ever—for it answered to an echo in his heart. It shook him; his eyes grew dim: then, suddenly, in the middle of an air, a wailing minor broke in abruptly;—he could bear it no longer.

“Isabel,” he said, “come out with me.”

She looked up at him, wonderingly, struck a few chords, and went.

“Damn the fellow’s coolness!” said Mr. Upton, as the door closed on them. “I dare swear he’s an awful brute at bottom! And those cursed settlements! I’ve a good mind to stop it yet!”

And he kicked away a foot-stool, and went and rang the bell violently.

Instantly a servant appeared.

“My compliments to Lady Upton, and I should like to speak to her for a few minutes.”

In two minutes the man was back.

“Her ladyship’s compliments, and she was exceedingly sorry, but her head was so very bad; if Mr. Upton could kindly wait until morning, she would be grateful to him.”

And Mr. Upton *could* wait—willingly. The two minutes had been long enough for him to picture the horrors of the coming interview. He received the reply thankfully, saying to himself:

“Well, it won’t be *my* fault, whatever comes of it. I’ve done all I could.”

When Mr. Warfield had shut the door he got a cloak from the hall, and wrapped it round Isabel, took her hand and laid it on his arm, and led her silently into the Wilderness.

When they got amongst the larches, shut in from all the world, with only the pale moon to look down on them from above, he spoke, in a voice filled with strange vibrations, like the echoes of distant moans.

“Isabel, are you not afraid?”

She looked up at him, and smiled: “Of to-morrow?—of you? No.”

“Child! you do not know. To-morrow is but the entrance into a new Future—a Future that is dark to me, that to-night fills me with fear.” He stopped and listened. “Do you hear that strange, soughing noise among the branches?”

"Yes, I like it; it generally comes before rain."

"Well, I do *not* like it. It seems to me to hold voices of warning and terror; hush!—do you not hear the moans and wailing in it?"

She gave his arm the slightest pressure, and they moved on; but he continued:

"It says strange things to me. Look at the fantastic figures on the path! they, too, are like shapes from that dim, mysterious future, mocking and menacing me. 'Stand back!' they say; 'stand back!—while yet there is time. Tempt us not; there is no repentance with us!' Look, how they threaten and advance, and seize us in their strange blackness! Isabel! Isabel! I am afraid!"

Isabel shivered, and gave a quick, half-fearful glance round, while pressing closer to his side; then she smiled again, and said:

"I am *not*, Gerald, not with you. They are but the shadows thrown by the moon; as it rises, they will vanish in its light. And if any such shapes *do* threaten our future, we will meet them together; and our love shall shine on them till they, too, are covered with it and

vanish—as these will soon. Dear Gerald—it is strange for *you* to be afraid!”

“It is for you—for you only. *I* could face it all. But for you, I fear. Ah! *there*, I am a very coward. Isabel, my love, it is not too late—I love you so—I can even let you go. It will be best so; it shall be so. You do not love me, and it won’t hurt you. Leave me to my fate: alone, I can meet it.

She looked up at him in wonder, but spoke never a word.

“If you marry me, at the best there will be much to suffer; the wife’s part, without the wife’s love, must be a heavy burden; and at the worst! ah! the worst would be too horrible! No, you shall go!” And he stood and shook off her hand. “Make haste, child, and escape. Flee, while yet there is time; while I can let you go. Go! I say.”

She stood there quite still, but there was trouble as well as wonder in the raised eyes.

“Gerald,” she said, “I do not wish to go; I will *not* go; I am yours. You have taken me, and you have no right to send me away. You have given me gladness, and hope, and love, and—I love you; whatever you may think, I *do*

love you. You have given me all, and do you think I am not ready to suffer for you? do you think I would not share any lot with you gladly? Let the future bring what it will, I welcome it—with you. If I may suffer for you, I shall be all the more yours. Gerald, don't turn away—don't fear—I *am* yours, it cannot be altered ;—take me."

"Child, child! you do not know. The awfulness of suffering, the weight of misery that a soul can bear and live, are out of your knowledge, and so you are brave; but you may grow to them—you will! Listen! I believe you, nay, I *know* you, to be pure, true, good; but to-night my soul tells me I shall doubt you. I have lived and grown in doubt, it is part of me, and I *shall* doubt you. Could you bear *that*? Could you have patience, and wait, and forgive?"

"I could bear all things, for—I love you. And you would know it; and sooner or later all would again be made clear."

"Sooner or later! *Too late*, perhaps!"

"There is no 'too late,'" said Isabel. "There, at least, the truth shall shine forth!" and as she spoke she looked up to the sky.

“God have mercy on us, then!” said Mr. Warfield, “and may he deal with me, as I deal with you!”

“Don’t say that, Gerald, *that* makes me afraid. I am safe with you, I know; but such a saying fits no mortal. In mercy may He deal with *us*, as with all.”

“So be it, child! But my heart is heavy, and weird whispers of unknown ill come to me on the wind :—listen!”

“It is nothing, Gerald; nothing but what I have heard many a time. I am to be your wife to-morrow; you asked me once to *give* you a kiss, and I did—may I now?”

He looked down on her sadly, wistfully.

“Yes child, do! It is strange comfort—such a kiss!—But you don’t know—do!”

And he stooped his head to meet her. The lips had nearly met, when with a quick motion she drew back. What had come to her? What subtle power passed from soul to soul? She drew back suddenly, while the blood rushed over face and brow, and covered her face with her hands.

Under the moonlight he saw it, and with an

inarticulate cry seized her to his breast, and covered her face with passionate kisses.

“My Isabel! Mine at last! My own!”

“O! Gerald don’t! You frighten me!”

“Nay, love, not now. I must. To know that it is real! that it has come at last; the sweet, precious love!” And he stood and held her there, clasped close, *so* close! “Nay, I cannot let you go,”—as they walked on again, his arm still round her, “Look, the shadows are nearly gone! But they may go or stay, I can laugh at them now! And I feared, and would have sent you away, my darling; I, that could face a world of shadows now; of all human ills! Ah! Isabel, Isabel! won at last; thank God!”

And the moon rose high in the heavens, and the shadows passed, and the soft night wind bore no fears nor warning, but only love whispers, to their ears as they moved gently on with little speech, just now and then a word, whose tones thrilled from heart to heart: filled full of love; drinking deep draughts of richest earthly bliss.

But the moon rose, the night crept on, the air grew keen and chill; time, the merciless,

that flies so fast when we would keep him, and goes with such dragging steps when we agonize for his flight, waited not ; on his quickest wings he sped away ;—it was night, and they must part.

“It is late,” said Isabel, “we must go in.” And as she spoke she sighed, and stood and looked yet once again on the scenes she had known and loved so long ; decked now with a new beauty, a new meaning : she stood and looked, and was very loth to leave.

“Must we?” he said, “Nay, stay just a little longer ! You are tired, love ? Rest, then, against me ; rest so ever, it is your place.”

And he laid her head against his breast, and his hand lay on the shining hair, and he was content.

Suddenly she raised her head and looked up at him, and cried in a new tone, a tone he had dreamed of but never heard, passionate, intense,—

“Gerald, if you leave off loving me now, I shall die !”

“O, my love !” he said, and he gathered her to him and folded her close, “my love, I could not. I am yours—all yours. Words

cannot say what I feel for you; yours—*all* yours! In time and in eternity—for ever and for ever!

The strong words, the firm, triumphant voice, comforted her, and stilled a little the trembling form; but yet she sighed.

“Ah! it cannot be that our lives will be like that!” she said, “it would be too beautiful—too happy; we should not want to go—even to heaven!”

“My love, it *can* be, it *shall* be. O, my love! But I am cruel to you, you are tired. We will go. Say good night to me here in the moonlight, in the place you love, away from all the world. Say good night to me, for I must leave you. But it is for the last time, the very last. Rest well, my love, my bride—my wife to-morrow. My wife! To part no more on this side death; mine always! by night and day—always mine; for ever and for ever!”

And he poured heart and soul into one long passionate kiss, that clung, and clung, and would not let her go,—while the echo sent back, all unheeded, “For ever! For ever!”

Then Isabel raised her head, and the moonlight shone on her upturned face, which was as

the face of an angel; and in her heart and on her lips dwelt a solemn vow, "For ever and for ever!"

So they said good night and parted, on the evening of the day, when the wedding was to be to-morrow.

CHAPTER XIV.

AND that to-morrow came, and Isabel watched its dawn, as she was used to watch many day-dawns.

She watched and saw the pale grey creep stealthily on the heavy darkness, till the darkness was covered, then a faint tinge of gold flushed all the sky; and lo! the grey was blue! and the glorious sun appearing poured his splendour in bright, rosy fleeces, and long, wide streaks of pink, that floated in the pale, clear azure, and made the old, wintry earth a glory and a joy;—for some brief moments. Then faded, faded, faded, and left it grey and chill; while those same rosy clouds—could they be the same?—spread, and gathered, and joined, till they had formed a dull pall over all the land.

Isabel stood and watched them. She had

joyed in the gorgeous splendour—she smiled at the gathering darkness.

“It will rain,” she thought, “but not soon; and if it does?”—and again a smile completed the thought. “And dear Harry, I am so glad he sent me that little note last night!” and she took it up and read again,—

“DEAR IZZY,

“Here I am, all right. I’ve had a tremendous walk over the moors with Bob, and come home in my right mind. I shan’t try to see you before it comes off, but mind you come to me in the old schoolroom before you go. How horrid that looks! But needs must, I suppose. I shall slip out of the dining-room when *you* do; so mind you come, Izzy, and let me have you all to myself just once more. My own, dear, little sister.

“Your very wicked

“OLD HARRY.

“10 P.M.—But Pearson is not to give it you if you are asleep.”

“Dear, old Harry! Always so good and kind to me,—why will he go and do such pro-

voking things to mamma? But he's not wicked, not a bit! O, why don't Gerald and he understand one another, when they are both so good, really? But they will," and she smiled again, and blushed, "for now I shall make Gerald understand, now that I shall have him all to myself; and then—Harry will love any one who loves him! And we shall all be happy, so happy! I never could be happy if they did not love one another! No, not with Gerald!"

She started at the sound of a knock—but it was only Pearson, who entered with an eager face full of important news, which darkened somewhat, however, as she saw Isabel standing by the window.

"What, up already, Miss Isabel!" she cried; "O, you shouldn't have done that! This day of all days you should have stayed in your bed! But there, there, what's done can't be undone, it's no use crying over spilt milk;—and what news do you think I have got for you this morning? You'll never guess!"

"No, indeed, nursie, I don't know what to guess;—unless, indeed, Bob thinks it's going to be fine; *that* would be good news to you, I

know, for he's nearly always right. You shake your head?—Well, I thought it couldn't be that, it looks so very like rain;—and I can't think of anything else. So please tell me."

"Ah! you think it's nothing! But I know whose eyes will sparkle to hear it! Guess, just once more!"

"O, nursie! I really can't. If there is anything, tell me."

"So, so, Miss Upton! Times have changed! I *have* known when you'd have guessed half-an-hour at a thing. But there, I'm an old fool! Of course you've got a full heart and a full head, with no room for nonsense in either of 'em this day. Well, my darling, it's a horse! The most beautifullest horse!—'at Bob says Sir Harry's been a longing for this ever so long. An' it's here in the stable!—an' Mr. Warfield's been and bought it, and sent it to him! There, now! What do you say to that for news? Isn't it good hearing for a wedding morning?"

"O, I *am* glad!" cried Isabel, flushing over face and neck with pleasure, "I should never

have guessed that, never. I *am* glad. Harry will be so pleased. How good it is of him."

"Aye, love, it is. Real good. It's not what it costs, that's not much matter to Mr. Warfield; but to have gone about it himself, as they say he did, and got the very thing as Sir Harry wanted most, that's not what folks does every day, specially rich folks, as isn't used to taking trouble theirselves. But there's more. That's not all the news. Mr. Warfield has sent Sir Harry a horse—and he's sent something else—for you!"

"O, nursie! Don't make me wait! Where is it? What is it?"

Pearson slowly brought her right hand from behind her back, looking triumphantly at Isabel the while, and showed a large, beautiful, white bouquet; white and green, only.

"O, give it me, please!" said Isabel, holding out her hand.

"Aye! but that's not all," continued Pearson, still keeping the flowers. "See! there's a note twisted round the stalks; that'll be the best news, I know; I'll give you that first." And she offered to take it off.

Isabel stopped her. "No, nursie," she said, "I'll do that; give it me."

Pearson looked at her in astonishment at the new tone, but gave up the flowers at once.

"Aye, aye!" she said, "that's the way! We're well enough, *we* are, that have lived with her all her life, and waked and watched for her, and listened for her little pattering feet like sweet music, *we're* all well enough; but not by no means fit so much as to touch the paper 'at *he's* written on! O, my lamb! my darling! how can you? But I know you love me all the same—it's only the way of the world;—and you've heard never a word I've said! Well, it's all the better. But to think that a scrap of paper can make you look at it like that! with that soft, shining light in your eyes; and put away as if they were nothing, even the beautiful flowers 'at you love so much. Why goodness, gracious me!" she exclaimed, as her eyes fell on the stem of the bouquet:—and she went close up to the table where it lay to look at it.—"I can scarce believe my eyes; but they are, they surely are, real diamonds and emeralds! O, Miss Isabel, only look here!"

“Yes, nursie, yes! I dare say. Presently.” And she still kept reading her note for a little while before she looked at the jewels. Then she took up the bouquet and examined them, smiling tearfully the while.

“They *are* pretty,” she said; “they are *very* pretty. O, how good he is! I can never do enough for him, never!” And she laid down the jewels, and took up her letter, and read it again.

And as she read, the tears began to steal down her face, faster and faster they came; she kissed the paper passionately, and, falling on her knees by the bed, hid her face there, and sobbed aloud.

“O, Miss Isabel! For mercy’s sake! How can you!—on your wedding-day!” cried Pearson, utterly aghast. And she went and stood over her, and put a hand on her shoulder, and kissed her bent head. “O, my darling, don’t! do get up!”

But Isabel did not move, and the sobbing continued.

Then Pearson tried another tone, a tone that, as a child, had often made her start.

“For shame, Miss!” she said, “for shame!

Get up this minute, I say, and let me have no more nonsense!"

Still there was no motion of obedience. So, in absolute despair, she tried a heroic remedy.

"If you don't get up, I'll fetch my lady!"

The effect was like that of an electric shock. Isabel sprang to her feet, and stood trembling.

"Oh, nursie!" she said, "I'm so sorry; I'll be good directly—indeed I will; but you see he's so kind, so very kind. And you won't fetch mamma, nursie; oh, I know you won't! How could you frighten me so."

"Indeed, but that's just what I will do, if there are any more such goings on!" said Pearson, sternly. "And because he's so kind, you say! A pretty reason, that, to stick yourself down and cry as if your heart would break, which is just what mine feels like to see you! Nay, *I'm* not going to cry, nor you, neither; not a bit more, or I go for my lady, as sure as my name's Pearson! Come, and let me dress you directly. Why, I've my lady to do yet, and heaps of things to see after. *I've* no time to waste in crying nor talking, neither; I have my work to do, and I just mean to do it. So come away this very minute; you'll never get

any better, standing looking at me like that. Come here, Miss Isabel, and bathe your eyes, I say! O my, O my! To think you should go and cry, after all,—and all for a rubbishy bit of a note! If it had been them beautiful jewels, now, one wouldn't so much have wondered; but you've hardly even looked at them!"

"Now, nursie, dear, don't be so cross, please," said Isabel; "I'll do just as you bid me. Only listen for a minute: there is an emerald cross that is pinned on, and you are to put it on the pearl necklace I am to wear to-day, because it is emerald; and he calls them my colours—white and green."

"And very pretty it will look; but I don't see anything to cry about in *that*, neither."

"And," continued Isabel, "it is a necklace that is twisted round the stem, emerald and diamond—green and white, too; and it is only arranged round the bouquet just for to-day."

"And never did I see such a thing before!" said Pearson; "and I call it a great waste;—not that they'll be any the worse, sure enough. And you ought to be glad and proud—that's what you ought, Miss Isabel; and not go crying, like a baby: not that a baby *would* cry at

the sight of such pretty things—he'd know better! And I *do* believe it *is* going to rain, too!"

Poor Pearson! the wail of her heart, like many another stifled suffering, found vent in a general cantankerousness. She was, as she would have expressed it, "as cross as a bear;" but then anything was better than sitting down to cry: and between the two was no alternative.

So she concluded her tirade in the most injured of tones, with—"And I *do* believe it *is* going to rain, too!"

Isabel, who had been bathing her eyes diligently, turned round to her and smiled.

"Come, now, nursie," she said, "*that's* not my fault, at any rate. Kiss, and be friends; please, do! Look, my eyes are nearly all right, and you don't know how much better I feel."

"Well, well," answered Pearson, "you always could get round me, and I suppose you always will. But, dear heart, *don't* cry again, and *do* make haste, for I expect my lady's bell every minute."

And after this the toilet proceeded rapidly, and one of Mr. Warfield's dream pictures was realized for him—a picture yet more lovely

than his dream; for in its eyes was the light of love, and the soft, lingering, after-glow of deep emotion.

And Isabel was not the only one who watched that sunrise; many were the anxious eyes turned towards it; many the vexed, appealing looks, fixed on the relentless clouds, as they mingled and formed that grey, unbroken roof. But alas! they neither lifted nor changed; only, as yet, it did not rain; and therefore some few—they were very young, these—hoped it would clear up at twelve o'clock.

In fear and in hope the guests had all assembled. The long procession went on its way. Still it did not rain.

They reached the church, and there met Mr. Warfield.

A bridegroom to be proud of, as many thought; one who could not be overlooked even beside his bride—and if there is a position trying to humanity, it is surely that—as we all know. But he stood there, strong, triumphant, smiling; happiness in his heart and sunshine in his face, and this sunshine fell on Isabel, and was better to her than the glory of the sun which he had dreamed would

be upon her; it shone on her and lent a radiance to her smile,—for she *did* smile, there, at the altar. Smiled again, and looked up at him with a world of trusting love in her eyes as she took upon her the most solemn of earthly vows; took them in all earnestness and simplicity, with the faith of a child, and the deep devotion of a woman.

And it was done. That which could never be undone. Together they went and signed the books; for the last time Isabel Upton wrote her name; then came out, leaning on her husband's arm, Isabel Upton no longer, her own no longer; and happy that it was so, proud to belong to him.

At her appearing, the bells broke out into a joyous peal, flowers fell under her feet, flowers poured in at the carriage windows, flowers fell before its wheels, and it passed on and crushed them; happy flowers to be so crushed! Arches of flowers were over them, those happy two; smiles and joy, and shouts of welcome were around them;—and still it did not rain! And as for the sun? Did they even know that the sun did not shine upon them!

And Flora, the radiant, did they notice that

she was quiet and pale that day; that Miss Warfield was cold and impassive; that there was a heaviness over all the party? No, truly; they saw none of these things.

And yet not all the party shared this dullness. Lady Upton looked well pleased.

Sir Harry, her son, was there opposite to her; ready, courteous, handsome; only *too* ready for his years, and with a shade of haughtiness in tone and manner that hardly became them; but which pleased his mother well. Mr. Upton, too, having once got safe home without rain or damp, had experienced a sensation of relief, and consequently made himself all that a polished man of the world can be; which, on such an occasion, and, indeed, on most others, is not a little.

Yes. Lady Upton looked well pleased. And her looks were true indicators of her thoughts. She was well pleased, with reason. Her son and her brother-in-law did her credit. Her daughter had made one of the best matches in the county, and all the chief people of the neighbourhood were assembled at her table to honour it. Things had gone well with her; so well, that she came very near

that day to forgiving the existence of the daughter who had brought her this success.

Still, things went heavily, and perfect sunshine was on only two faces—the bride's and the bridegroom's: there it shone unbroken. They looked content, happy; troubled with no doubts, disturbed by no fears, indifferent to storm or sunshine.

And, yet, it was only last night that Mr. Warfield had taken Isabel into the Wilderness, in anguish of spirit.

Only last night! But it seemed long, long ago, very long: a thing of the Past, that had been left far behind, and had vanished out of sight, almost out of mind. The Present had rushed over it and hidden it, the glorious Present! And this Present was his, and his bride was his, and her love was his; how should he not be content?

He spoke little. How should he express what was in him to a crowd of mere acquaintances? And he would not withdraw his mind from its content, to compose a speech to suit them. No, that day he had a right to, a right to keep it for himself, and he held to his right, and answered with only a few brief

words of thanks, when they drank the health of Mr. and Mrs. Warfield.

And then Mrs. Warfield left the room, and Flora with her, and immediately afterwards Harry disappeared; and his mother's eyes followed him as he went, and a cloud gathered on her brow, as she thought,

"To the last, she comes between us! Thank God, it is the last! Our doting bridegroom will hardly be willing to share his precious treasure with a boy, a younger brother!"

And Isabel's thoughts, meanwhile, were full of this brother, and she hastened to put off the bridal white, and hardly heeded Pearson's ready help or Flora's caressing touch, or heard the feeling in their quivering voices, which they tried to drown in careless talk; so bent was she on getting through it all to go to Harry.

She found him in the old school-room, as he had said she would; the bare room that had grown to look strange to her lately, where she had spent so many weary hours in the lonely years; where he had often comforted her, whence he had often rescued her,—the bright, wilful, loving boy, who would have his way.

And her thoughts were full of him, and her heart was very tender to him as she went in and saw him standing there; as wilful, perhaps as loving,—certainly not as bright.

He was drumming impatiently on a window-pane, and whistling, but turned instantly as she appeared, giving her no time to speak.

“So, you’ve not forgotten, after all,” he said, “I thought you had.”

“O, Harry! Forgotten! And I’ve been making such haste to have time; and when did I ever forget?”

“Ah, more than once lately! But, however, you *have* managed to snatch some stray minutes for me, it seems; so come over here to me, I want you here.”

She went up to him, and he put his arm round her and held her close, and looked searchingly into her face.

“So you really do care more for this Warfield than for me?” he said. “You are going away with him from me, and,—Izzy,—you are not sorry to go!”

“O, Harry! indeed, I am sorry to leave you,” she replied eagerly, with a look of dis-

tress, "I wish you were going too, indeed I do,—but—"

"Yes,—*but*—you won't stay for that, or any thing else!—you must choose, you see; so you take him and leave me."

"Don't say that, Harry; it is not so, indeed; I don't leave you, not in that way. We shall soon come back, and then you can be with me again, as much as ever you like."

"Can I? Well, I suppose I *could*. But, Izzy, you won't *want* me, that's where it is; and I *have* loved you, you know I have, for all my selfish, rough ways,—and now to lose you like this!"

"O, Harry, don't pray! We *have* always loved each other, as we do now; and you are not going to lose me; and you have been good to me always, and not cruel nor selfish."

"Aye, but I have, though, many a time, and am, now; don't I know it well enough? but it only makes me worse. O, yes, I know what I am! spoiling your wedding-day like this—and you've not had so many happy days, poor Izzy! And I *did* want to see you happy, I did! But not in this way; not for him to come and take

you all to himself, with his lordly air, and his way of always doing right, and carry you off from us for ever! *He's* never wrong, not he! and I hate him, that's what I do; and you've given yourself to him, and his name is your name, and you are all his, and you are ours no longer! Damn him! how I hate him! Were there not heaps of girls all over England that he could have had for the asking? And he must come —"

"Harry, stop, for shame!" cried Isabel. "You *are* cruel now, and wicked. Wicked to say such dreadful things—and cruel to me, for he is my husband. Let me go, Harry." And she tried to get away, but he held her fast, and as he felt her struggle from him for the first time in her life, his anger grew very fierce.

"No," he said, "be quiet. You *shall* hear what I choose to say; you shall know what is in my mind. I did mean that you should never know; I had no thought of telling you when I asked you to come here; but I have been growing madder and madder all the morning, and now you've finished it. Do you know, Mrs. Warfield, that I have stood and looked at your husband and longed to fly at

his throat and strangle him, standing there above me, so placid and superior; and looking at me as if—as if I were a puppy that wanted breaking!”

Isabel ceased to struggle for release, and stood quietly within his arm; but her face was very pale, and tears trembled on her eyelids.

“Oh! Harry, Harry; how can you?” she said. “You break my heart. And he that would do anything for you! Why only this morning he sent you that beautiful horse that you have been longing for! O surely you can’t know that—perhaps they never told you, and—”

“O yes, I know. It’s him all over! He flings it at me as he would throw a dog a bone! What right has he to think I can’t get a horse if I choose? Poor Sir Harry Upton! he’ll have to send the hat round soon, I suppose—but until he does, people might be civil enough to think he has a fifty-pound note to spare—or a two-hundred—really, it makes one laugh.”

And he did laugh, a harsh, bitter laugh, strangely far from mirth.

“O Harry, what has come to you? What can I say when you turn all to evil? I am sure he meant nothing to hurt you, nothing

against you in any way; he meant only to be kind."

"Kind? Yes, you've hit it! Awfully kind—to himself! He steals from me my sister, and my sister's love; and then, out of pure kindness, to make it up to me, of course, sends me a horse!"

A slight noise made them turn, and, standing at the open door, they saw Mr. Warfield, who had heard the tone of Sir Harry's speech, though the words had not reached him; it annoyed him naturally, and he came forward haughtily, wearing the very manner that was so displeasing to Sir Harry.

"Isabel," he said, "it is time we went."

"O really, Mr. Warfield," said Sir Harry, still holding his sister, "I beg to apologize—but I thought I might say good bye to my sister—alone."

"Yes, dear Harry, yes," interrupted Isabel, trembling visibly, "and now we have said good bye, and I will go."

And she attempted to move, but Sir Harry still held her, and looked defiantly at Mr. Warfield, challenging an answer.

"Certainly, Sir Harry," replied Mr. War-

field, "and now that you have said good bye to your sister, as I hear, will you, if you please, let me have my wife?"

"Your wife! Confound your insolence! Yes, by God! she *is* your wife; your goods and chattels! Take her!" And so saying, he flung her violently from him, then continued,

"O what a fool I was, what a cursed fool! when I would take her to that party."

"For shame, Sir Harry! How dare you!" said Mr. Warfield, pale with anger. "If that is the way in which you have treated your sister, let me tell you it is *not* a way in which I shall allow any one to treat my wife."

"And how dare you, sir, speak to me in that tone!" said the boy, as he came and stood opposite Mr. Warfield with clenched hands, and shaking with passion.

"O Harry, dear Harry!" cried Isabel, and she would have taken hold of him, but her husband put his hand upon her, and drew her to himself, and put *his* arm round her, and stood so, as if sheltering her;—and the sight seemed to excite Sir Harry to actual madness.

"Yes, how dare you, I say! how dare you speak so to me! I am not your lackey! and

how dare you hold my sister from me!" And he raised his clenched right hand and shook it before Mr. Warfield's face. "And how dare you send a paltry horse to me, as if I couldn't buy fifty horses if I chose!"

"Sir Harry, you are mad!" replied Mr. Warfield, in the coldest tone. "We will leave you. As for the horse, I went about it myself, and certainly meant to do you a pleasure; if it offends you, you can send it back."

"And so I will," cried the furious boy, "and so I should have done without your leave; and you *shall* go with your cursed *we*,—*we*; but not till I have moved your high, still face for once!" And he made a sudden rush, and grappled Mr. Warfield round the throat.

Isabel sprang forward and tried to seize Sir Harry to pull him off, but Mr. Warfield's strong hands were already on his shoulders. "Hush, child!" he said, very quietly, and still wearing the same cold face, "shut the door and leave him to me;—nay, I won't hurt him," he added, in answer to the piteous appeal in her eyes.

And Isabel shut the door, as she was bid, and turned to them again; and Mr. Warfield backed the boy, with his arms pinioned, into a

chair, and held him there as in a vice, while he panted and struggled, in vain; till, feeling his utter helplessness, he cried out wildly.

"But you *do* hurt me; cool and strong as you are, I can at least make you do *that*.—You *do*, I say!"

"You hurt yourself, Sir Harry," said Mr. Warfield; "*I* don't hurt you. For God's sake be quiet! Look at Isabel! and if you *do* love her, have some mercy on her. Is this a scene for a bride on her wedding-day?"

Isabel was trembling all over, but she steadied herself, and came and knelt by them, and laid her head on Harry's knees, and kissed his hands.

"O, Harry!" she said, "I know you love me; look at me, and kiss me before I go. And Gerald"—and she laid one hand on her husband's hand "leave hold of him, he will be quiet; I promise for him that he will be quiet."

Then Mr. Warfield took his hands slowly off him, folded his arms, and stood looking at the two, with a heavy frown on his face. But this time Sir Harry did not look at him, only at his sister; he looked at her, as she knelt there be-

fore him, kissing his hands; and he flung his arms round her neck, and began to cry and sob, like the child he was.

But Mr. Warfield's face grew harder if anything, and something of contempt mingled with the dislike he shewed.

"And O, Harry, dear!" said Isabel, as soon as he would let her speak, "I am sure Gerald meant to please you, and you wouldn't hurt any one that meant to be kind, you never would; tell him you wouldn't. And you will keep the horse, and you will both be friends, for my sake; won't you, Gerald?" And she turned and looked appealingly into her husband's face. The answer was somewhat slow in coming, even with that look fixed on him.

"I am willing," he said, "for your sake."

"Aye, Izzy! you hear," said Sir Harry, bitterly; "that's it,—for *your* sake—not mine. He looks on me as a weak, passionate fool; and I've acted like one, and a brute, too.—Hush, Izzy! no more; I know what I have to do. Get up now."

And he raised her tenderly, and got up himself, and went to Mr. Warfield, and said,—

"I have acted like a brute and a fool, Mr.

Warfield; will you forgive me, for my sister's sake? and will you shake hands, and say good bye? I shan't trouble you again soon, you know, and I will be wiser when next we meet."

The voice began very steadily, but trembled and faltered towards the end; and he bit his lips to keep them still.

"Let me assure you before we part, Sir Harry," replied Mr. Warfield, "that I have never meant anything but kindness to you.— Well, well, if you don't like *that* word, anything you *do* like! Shake hands, and good bye, with all my heart." And he held out his hand frankly, and the two shook hands; then he continued,— "And now, Isabel, we *must* go, we are very late."

And the brother and sister had yet one more embrace, one more last kiss, and then Isabel went down with her husband, and left her brother alone.

They went down amongst all the friends and acquaintances to say good bye; and Isabel's uncle kissed her with real feeling, and a qualm of self-reproach. Everybody kissed her, that could possibly lay claim to such a privilege; and Lady Upton felt that it was expected of

her, that she should do it, too. And she did it; and the kiss hurt the girl, and she looked appealingly into her mother's eyes; but nothing but hardness met her there. Then her own took something of answering hardness: it was the last kiss, that; and, after it, she passed through the hall and left the house, with a firm step and dry eyes, and an ache at her heart.

In the carriage at last, and off, with the necessary shower of old shoes following them; and two wistful faces looking after them from an upper window.

"O Sir Harry, Sir Harry! she's the dearest and best!" cried Pearson. "What *shall* we do without her!"

"She is, Pearson; and do you know I've been a brute to her, even this very last morning, and sent her away with a sad heart: that's what I have done for her to-day,—my poor Isabel, my little Izzy, that I have always loved! But I'll never do it again, never,—whatever he does or says! I'll have patience for evermore; upon my soul, I will!"

And in the carriage Isabel says:

"You'll forgive him, Gerald,—really and truly?"

"Oh! let us forget it, darling," he said, hastily; "it is too shameful a blot on such a day. *This* is the face I want to think of;—no other under the sun!" And he drew it towards him and kissed it gently, as a mother might have kissed it.

"But, Gerald, I *can't* forget him, poor Harry; unless,—you see he has had no father,—Gerald?"

"Well, I *do* forgive him! And I will be just the same to him as if this had never been. Will that do?—Yes? Then *now* let us forget it, and let me have my wife's thoughts all for my own on this one day, at least,—this day of days: the blessed day of all the weary years!"

And now, at last, the clouds opened and the rain fell—slowly, gently, steadily; faster and faster, till it clattered against the windows, and drenched the postillions, and put the maid behind in an agony for her new bonnet; and the trees dripped on them, and the roads were pools. But they went on, and on, and never felt it, never cared; what were omens to them? It was too late for omens. Were they not together, belonging to one another, safe from all human ills but death, for ever? Safe from *all*

human ills, for death seemed far off,—very far; so far, they never thought of him at all.

Life was in them; life, and love, and joy. What had they to do with death?

“Till death us do part:” those woeful words, so sadly realized by many a suffering soul, had borne no true meaning to their ears. To them, they had only meant, “for ever and for ever!”

CHAPTER XV.

It was Christmas time in Warfield Chase. And such a Christmas! The shining holly and sacred mistletoe decked hall, and parlour and kitchen; the bright red berries laughed at you from all possible nooks and corners; while the shy, white ones just shewed themselves timidly,—feeling their own delicate rareness too much, to flaunt it in the public gaze.

Mr. Warfield, seeing them as he passed down the staircase on Christmas morning, smiled on them; they looked to him like Isabel—as did all things fair, and sweet, and shy.

The house was fresh and beautiful throughout; and bright, fresh faces, moved along its corridors, and low laughter sounded in it, and pleasant voices; for Mr. and Mrs. Warfield were at home, and it was Christmas time.

They had had one honeymoon by the sea.

They had walked by its side, and listened together to its many mysterious voices; had watched it in storm and calm, and welcomed its wildest winds upon their seeking faces; and had felt something of its vastness, and solitude and power, pass into their souls. They had had another honeymoon at home, with only the inevitable interruption of morning visitors; and now they had taken their place and begun their duties in the way of hospitality. It must be done some time; and what time better than Christmas?

So jolly Old Christmas reigned in Warfield Chase once more, and lorded it in the servant's hall, and regaled tenants, and farmers, and labourers; and worked mightily in the kitchens at roasting and boiling, and all manner of cookery; and feasted right merrily in dining and in drawing rooms; and shed his warmth and loving kindness in all hearts, whence it exhaled, and was to be seen lying like a radiance on all faces; and possessed the house, and filled it from basement to roof with brightness, and sympathy, and love; he reigned supreme, that fine old English gentleman, and peace and goodwill reigned with him.

There had been dinners and little dances, and a tenants' ball in the hall; and now, on New Year's Eve, there was to be a grand ball in the large ball-room, which had been built in the times when Warfield Chase was celebrated throughout the county for its splendid hospitalities. This room had long been closed, and given over to dust and cobwebs, but it had been renovated with the rest of the house; nay, Mr. Warfield had bestowed special attention upon it. Isabel had not yet seen it, he had so willed it; and he was waiting in the drawing-room to take her there before the guests arrived.

He had not been there many minutes when she came in.

"O Gerald! I hope I have not kept you waiting!" she said.

"No, darling, not long. There, stand just there; and let me look at you."

She stood and looked up to him, with a smile and a blush.

"Shall I do?"

"Yes, you'll do." And he advanced and stooped, and just touched her shoulder with his lips; then put her hand on his arm, and said,

"Come, now, and let me show you the room I had got ready to please you,—my fairy queen, I thought you then;—more to me now than any ideas of fairies can express. But, do you know, love, I am glad you have kept to the white and green, and, really, that necklace looks very fine—on you."

"I'm so glad you are satisfied, Gerald. I was rather afraid whether you would think the dress too simple; but I wanted to wear that necklace, and I thought nothing else would go so well with it."

"My love, it is simply perfect; but here is my room."

They had passed along a wide corridor brilliantly lighted, and Mr. Warfield now threw open a folding door at the end of it.

"O how beautiful!" cried Isabel. "I never saw such a room!"

"Come inside the door, there is a draught here."

And they went inside, but Isabel said,

"O do let us stand here a minute, then, while I look."

"As many minutes as you will," and he

smiled upon her, "that is what it was done for."

So she stood and looked,—and it *was* beautiful.

White arches supported a high, vaulted roof of sky blue, studded with golden stars, and from the centre of each span hung a crystal chandelier; on each side were eight large windows hidden by hangings of rose-coloured satin, softened by white lace; and the spaces between them were filled alternately by a panel of pale pink bordered by a wreath of flowers and leaves, and one of looking-glass framed in gold: all along the walls were low seats of white wood and gold, whose cushions were covered with the same rose-colour as the window draperies; and at the farther end of the room was a raised semi-circular recess, which formed the orchestra. All this was seen by the light of hundreds of wax candles in the glittering chandeliers, whose drops sparkled like diamonds, and which were reflected again and again in the panels of looking glass.

"You are content with it?" said Mr. Warfield, after, perhaps, a minute or two.

“Oh! it is lovely! Like a dream of a room. Let us go on, now, and look at it closer.”

And they went on; Mr. Warfield saying, meanwhile,

“Then I am content too, and repaid for all my upholstering meditations;—and they were many and grievous!”

“How good of you, Gerald! You really did all this for me?”

“I really did. All this—and more!”

“Now I know what it made me think of!” cried Isabel. “It is just such a room as I used to dream in Fairyland for my princess, when she had escaped from all her troubles, and there was a ball on her marriage with the prince, and all the knights and ladies, and the court and the king were there!”

Mr. Warfield laughed gaily, “Ah well!” he said, “I am afraid my princess won’t have all that, though I am disposed even yet sometimes to think that she did drop on me from Fairyland! But I hope she will be happy in it just the same; and fancy her grim old husband the most charming of men, which is just as good as a prince, you know:—and most particularly that she will dance away in it to her heart’s content.”

"Shall I dance, Gerald? I thought perhaps as you don't—and being the hostess, you know,—I had better not."

"Not dance, child! Why, you would spoil all my pleasure! Of course you must stay in the drawing-room at first,—till most of the people have arrived,—but after that do just as you like, only be happy. Not dance because I don't! Of all the nonsense!"

"Oh! of course if you think it right, Gerald; only I thought, perhaps,—" and she paused.

"Well, what was the other wise thought in that little head?—that the dragon would be jealous of his treasure?—nay, never blush so, child: but if you *have* had any such thoughts," he continued more gravely, "put them away. Dance, talk, do just what you like best, and be very sure, my love, that the happier you are, the happier I shall be to see it. But listen! there are wheels on the drive. Let us go back to the drawing-room."

"O Gerald, I *am* happy, very happy!" said Isabel, as they went.

"Then, darling, I ask no more."

In the drawing-room they found Miss Warfield; a blot on the Christmas brightness.

Yes. I had forgotten Miss Warfield. There she sat, cold and unapproachable as ever, no light on her face, no love in her heart, but envy and very bitterness. Christmas had not reached her, nor even her rooms, nothing new nor fresh was there; when the house had been done, she had begged of her brother that her apartments might be left untouched; he had carelessly assented, and they still held the worn paper, and faded hangings, and furniture, that had been there when she was a child.

While she was out, on Christmas Eve, a servant had brought some bits of greenery, and tried to brighten them a little, but on her return, she tore them down angrily. She would none of the foolery! What joy did Christmas bring to her? She would have none of it!—and she had none. For she chose hate for love, and self-torment for sympathy; repelling Isabel's timid advances with unyielding hardness, and watching all the signs of her brother's love and happiness with grievous envy. What had she done, this young girl, that such a portion should be hers? what was she that she should be the light of his eyes, and the joy of his heart? that she should dare to

hover round him, and follow him hither and thither, and go into his library at her will and sit there, and put flowers on its heavy tables, and bits of delicate work among his very books? What was she, that she should do all this, and that he should like it, and smile upon her flittings, and say he could work twice as well when she was near him?

And then she wrote for him, too, with her white, slim fingers! Had not she, Priscilla, as she was walking in the garden one day, seen him kiss them when they brought him a paper?—and felt that she would gladly have crushed them in a vice, that they might never tempt a kiss again.

So she hated her; for that she loved her brother, and her brother loved *her*; while she, Priscilla, was out in the cold.

She hated her, and she watched her, quietly and unobtrusively; hardly with a hostile intention, only with a hostile feeling; still she did watch her all such time as she could bear to be in her presence. She always dined with them, and generally stayed during the evening. The first morning they were at home she had breakfasted with them, but that she had not

tried again; the easy, home-like ways of the young wife, the mutual little attentions of the familiar meal, were more than she could endure. But at all other times she was there; she had appeared at the dinners and dances; she was sitting in the drawing-room now, full dressed, ready for the ball.

They had not thought of her appearing, and it struck them with a little chill. Her presence *was* a chill and a restraint on their happiness always, for they felt her antagonism in some subtle way, carefully as she concealed it.

However, Mr. Warfield was too happy to be hard upon any one, he only said,—

“What, Priscilla! You going to grace the ball, too! Well, I am glad of it. Why, I think as we two old folks are coming out, we really ought to open it together—eh, Isabel?” And he laughed.

“Indeed, Gerald! I don’t see any reason why Miss Warfield should not dance; as for old folks, that is only your nonsense. And how beautiful your dress looks, Miss Warfield; what splendid lace!”

Miss Warfield flushed. “It was my mother’s, Mrs. Warfield; but if you wish for it, you shall

have it, of course," she replied in the meekest of tones.

"O, Miss Warfield! how *could* you think? O no, indeed!"

"Now Priscilla, none of that," said Mr. Warfield, sharply.

"O, I beg your pardon, Gerald! I didn't think—"

"Yes, you did; and don't do it again!"

But Miss Warfield had touched her foe that time, and could bear a reproof; only she saw she must be very careful.

The large room was filled, and the ball went right merrily.

Fair women and elegant men moved in measured time to the sweet music, and made a comely sight, while the bride hostess flitted hither and thither; the fairest, brightest, happiest of them all; and Mr. Warfield bore his part bravely, and, unless his looks belied him, was just as happy as she.

Yes, the ball went right merrily.

There were mirth and beaming smiles; music of sweet voices, and low, rippling laughter; tender, deferential homage, and deep flattery in tones of words that meant less than nothing;

pleasant words of comely matrons, and bluff greetings of country squires; life, music, and joy; health, wealth, and peace.

Peace? Were there, then, no aching hearts; no tired heads; no sad girls, longing vainly for the one who never came; no poor, snubbed young men, watching the greetings given to elder sons by faces that they loved; no striving mothers wondering how they must keep on the struggle if Sophia, or Emily, or Jane, could find no husband; no good, kind sisters and daughters whose homely virtues found no recognition there, and who sat wearily hoping that some family friend might come and give them the chance of one dance at least? Were there no envy, hatred, and malice; no uncharitableness?

Nay, it was not Utopia, nor even Fairyland; but, in truth, it looked very like it; and seeming goes for much. If all these things, and more, were there, they were at least well hidden; and, if as real, were certainly less shocking, under the thick veil of habitual repression and aristocratic ease, than when seen in all their native ugliness in the wretched dwellings of the vulgar poor.

Less shocking ; perhaps, more dangerous. All hidden evils, finding no outlet, live and grow in unsuspected, undisturbed repose, and never see the light. So, a man, proud, haughty, and malicious; nursed in luxury, and flattered, and served by all around him; may, wanting the touchstone, go through life, aye, even to his grave, thinking himself kind, loving, and forgiving. And so, also, with *every* human vice. The overt act being wanting, how easy to think ourselves far indeed from baseness such as that! Nay, rather, how impossible to believe that it could ever be in *us* to do the accursed thing!

But the ball went right merrily.

Near the entrance door Major Delisle, Lieutenant Marston, and Charley Dobree were standing together, looking critically at the dancers as they whirled past.

"Sweet little thing, that Mrs. Warfield," said the Lieutenant.

"Tame," said Major Delisle, "very tame."

"Ah," said Charley Dobree, "*you* go in for Miss Bellairs, and you ain't far wrong, for you wouldn't have the ghost of a chance with the other; she's Warfield's, body and soul."

"You're a clever boy, Charley," said the Major, "but young, very young. Let me give you a hint. There is never a better chance than to take a girl with her head full of all sorts of impossible perfections which she has embodied in one man, and fallen down before to worship. Be her friend; a quiet, unobtrusive friend; and wait. Then, when she finds that her idol is but of clay, and that all the gilding was done by her own imagination, then—why, then, make your game, and go in and win! At least he must be an awful muff that doesn't! It's the easiest thing out!"

"I say, Stoph, stop that, will you?" put in Lieut. Marston, "I'm no saint—"

"True for you, Fanny," assented Charlie, laughing.

"—But to sit down to a thing in that devilish cool sort of way, is beyond me,—and what's more, it don't give the girl a ghost of a chance, the odds are all on one side."

"Poor virtue!" answered the Major, "she must be hard up, to come to you for a champion, my sweet Fanny! Did you, by chance, look at your dear, pink cheeks so long this morning, that they have even taken in your very self,

and made *you* a believer in their delusive innocence? or, have you been dancing with Mrs. Warfield, and is it catching? otherwise contagious. Clearly there *is contiguity* in dancing, in these latter days."

"Sneer away, Stoph, you won't hurt me," replied Lieut. Marston, laughing. "I know well enough *I'm* no angel. All I say is,—be as black as the prince of darkness himself, if you choose, but don't go teaching such devil's lore to a boy. It comes fast enough, as some of us know."

" 'The devil a saint would be!' " said Major Delisle. "Surely, you are bilious, Fanny? You don't look it, of course; but then,—*your* looks! You are powerful, very powerful, my friend and brother beloved. Really, now, I should recommend you to adopt the Church as a profession; and, meantime, just practice on Charley—will you? Your heavy sermons will, doubtless, outweigh my poor instructions; only be sure to conclude by—'Do as I says, and not as I does!'"

"I say, now, don't you worry about me!" said Charley. "You're no end of a good fellow, Fanny;—but, look here! I ain't quite a

baby; I've got a few ideas of my own, I have, and don't believe implicitly even in Stoph's: to my mind it ain't worth while,—don't pay for all the bother and sneakiness."

"Bravo, my son!" said the Major, "go on and prosper! Stick to a sublime faith in yourself, and take your pleasures carefully after due deliberation; having counted the cost, and made up your mind to pay it;—and in time—why, you'll beat even me!"

"Never mean to try, O Beauty, the Inimitable," said Charley. "Come along, Fanny, and let's find Pop; he's the best antidote to Stoph, I know; I always take a dose of one after the other, on principle."

And the two laughed, and lounged away together; and Major Delisle, seeing Flora seated, went to pay his court to her, as he had done assiduously on all occasions since that first party at Warfield Chase.

Mr. Warfield was talking to her.

"What exquisite flowers yours are, Miss Belairs; I can't get such flowers," he said, as the Major came up to them.

"They *are* beautiful," she said, "but then I am so conceited, you see; I fancy it's partly

my doing. I don't think *any* one can arrange flowers as I can,—you agree with me in that, don't you Major Delisle?"

"In that, as in all things else, Miss Bellairs."

"Ah! thank you, I felt sure you would. And do you know, Mr. Warfield," she continued, smiling, "it's flat treason, I know of course, but I don't think the bouquets Isabel has now suit her nearly so well as mine did!"

"No? Well, perhaps they don't. But I can't resign in your favour, notwithstanding. Though nothing could be more like her, it's true, than those rosebuds, lilies, and ferns. How malicious you were about those flowers that day, Miss Bellairs; you know, after all, they were not thrown away."

"Oh, I know! It was only *I* who suffered that fate! However, I have quite forgiven you; we will let bygones be bygones."

"Roses and lilies are all very well in their way," said Major Delisle, who did not fancy listening to talk that was Greek to him; "they look pretty as long as there are none to compare with them; but place them by the brilliant blossoms of the tropics, and they become pale and insignificant. Give me the glowing, haughty

beauty, that need fear rivals in none!" And his eyes dropped on Flora's bouquet, gorgeous as usual, then sent one quick glance into hers, and sank again.

But Flora's eyes never drooped—she only smiled. "I love them all, but perhaps I do like the brightest best," she said; "still, they are not so sweet, and will not live in *our* climate; and I suppose hardly any of us would care to live in hot-house temperature for their sakes. No, for everyday life our flowers are best."

"Only, in some positions we cannot see their pale beauty," said the Major. "Most useful they may be; *not* most beautiful." Then,—

"I came to you hoping for a waltz, Miss Bellairs; may I have the pleasure?"

She accepted, graciously; and they joined the dancers. Mr. Warfield looked after them with an amused smile. "He will never make much way, there," he thought; "but I suppose it would be a sheer impossibility to convince him of the fact; and really I don't wonder! he *has* all the attractions."

Major Delisle's arm was round Flora's waist, and they were whirling in the waltz, when he spoke again:

"I had hoped, Miss Bellairs, that you might have honoured my poor flowers?"

"Thank you, very much, Major Delisle; they are most beautiful. But you see I am dreadfully capricious, and must have exactly what I fancy at the minute: but your flowers were magnificent."

"May I hope they are not thrown away?"

"Oh, dear! Major Delisle; I couldn't do such a thing! It would be like murder!"

"You are tender to *flowers*!"

"Yes," she replied; "they are lovely—and harmless." And she sent a mischievous glance into the soft, velvety eyes, fixed pensively on her face.

"By Jove! she is laughing at me!" he thought; and was consequently attracted still more by this very extraordinary girl, who could receive his flatteries and his flowers alike with indifference, and who stopped him dead whenever he tried the pathetic. Each time he saw her, from day to day, she piqued his self-love more and more; and he resolved, with an internal oath, that sooner or later she should pay it to him; for that this very difficult fortress *should* fall before him.

To what end? Would he marry her? Hardly. She was a beauty, and an heiress;—but, marriage!! He did just think of it, but shrugged his shoulders and smiled at the thought; he was not prepared for *that*! No; he *only* wanted to make her love him; to see her eyes droop when he spoke; to watch the colour come into her face; to hear the clear, sweet voice, tremble; to know that she waited, longing for his coming, and found every pleasure weariness without him. This was what he wanted—*only* this. We must not forget that he was a man of honour! And then? Why then, he would be gracious to her for awhile, until he tired; and wanted the excitement of another chase.

And yet he was a man of honour! who would have scorned to lie, to save his life, and shrunk in horror from taking the least sum of money unfairly from any man, even at play. But to make, by low, tender words, soft glances, and honied flattery, his talk and actions all one lie; to steal a girl's heart, and mind and soul; then fling her aside without one remorse, to live, with crushed heart, and broken spirits, a weary, listless life;—*this* treacherous lying and stealing brought him no shame: he was still a man of

honour. Nay, every new victim was a new triumph, and raised him higher in his own esteem, and in the esteem of many of his fellows.

But no such thoughts troubled him, nor them, nor any there; and the ball went right merrily.

"How delightful it is to see the young people so happy," said Miss Millicent Vane to Lady Upton; "and how beautiful dear Isabel looks. Really, it almost makes one feel young again."

"Well, I must say I am getting rather tired of it; I would go if it were not for Harry. And I am glad you *do* think Isabel looks well, for, to me, she looks very ridiculous with that absurd Sir Frederick Popham—now, candidly, did you ever see such an object? and this is the second time I have seen her waltzing with him!"

"It is so natural they should waltz together, Lady Upton, when they both dance so very well; and, candidly, I admire them very much! Sir Frederick, it must be admitted, *has* a few absurdities, but they are all on the surface, and he will drop them in time. The fact is, he underrates himself, and has adopted these

affectations to give himself a fictitious value; but he is a true-hearted man and a thorough gentleman, I am sure!"

"Really, Miss Millicent, you surprise me! Why, one would think you had fallen in love with the man! Not think enough of himself! why, he's the most affected, conceited creature I ever saw!"

Miss Millicent smiled, as she answered, "Ah, never mind that; I hold to my opinion. Only the other day, I saw him pick up Widow Barnes' little girl out of the mud, and wipe her face with her pinafore—to be sure, that didn't improve it!—and then he patted her head and gave her half-a-crown, and so sent her running home, all smiles, instead of tears."

"And you admire that! I don't. Besides, does it not occur to you, that it was a little performance intended for the benefit of Miss Bellairs? I need not ask if she was with you."

"Of course she was; but you are mistaken. Poor Sir Frederick! when he saw us he *almost* turned and fled; he was evidently in great fear of being laughed at; indeed, he did go as soon as politeness would allow."

The ball went right merrily.—

And at this same time Major Delisle and Lieut. Marston were standing together, again, and the Major was watching Isabel, eagerly.

“By Jove, Fanny!” he said, “look how that little girl is going it! What a colour she’s got, now, and her eyes shine like true brilliants. I have more than a mind to go in for her, after all; I’ll try for the first dance I can get.”

“Now, Stoph, just leave her in peace, can’t you? Look how Warfield’s watching her; he’s a real good fellow, for heaven’s sake let him alone.”

“Don’t be alarmed, O my Mentor! I want nothing that will do *him* any harm;—“*et quand même*,”—what is the virtue worth that won’t stand a trial? Adieu, mon cher, you are *too* good for me to-night.”

“Now, he’s up to mischief;” thought the Lieutenant, following him with his eyes, “he always is, when he begins to put in bits of French. Well, it’s no affair of mine,—‘*quand même*,’—as he says; but I *do* like Warfield.”

The Major went and got his dance, and Isabel’s eyes shone on him; as they had shone

on Sir Frederick; and still the ball went merrily, still Mr. Warfield smiled, still Miss Warfield watched; and she also smiled.

The ball went merrily, and amongst the merriest was Sir Harry; he came often to Warfield Chase, now, and he and Mr. Warfield were the best of friends. True, they rather avoided being alone together; but, then, they were very polite, and cautious not to offend each other; and Christmas had taken possession of them both in earnest, and they had shaken hands with real cordiality and mutual good wishes; and now Sir Harry was at the ball, dancing, with all his might, every dance, and enjoying with the full power of his youth, health, and seventeen years.

He was sitting, for two minutes, to recover breath, by his firm friend and ally, Charley Dobree, to whom he was confidential on most subjects.

"Isn't Ada Powerscourt stunning?" he said. Whereupon Mr. Dobree looked at him, in pitying wonder.

"What an innocent!" he exclaimed. "Why, you've never been and gone and fallen in love with *her*! She's old enough to be your mother!"

Sir Harry blushed. "O hang it, Charley, she's nothing like as old as that! I know she's not such a baby as some of the girls that can't open their mouths;—but then she's some sense, and can talk to a fellow!"

"I believe you, my boy!" answered Charley. "She's practised long enough! Well, success attend you, say I. The Powerscourt is harmless, and may keep your ingenuous youth out of worse mischief."

"You needn't make fun of a fellow, like that, Charley;" said Sir Harry, half offended, "you are not such a Methusaleh yourself."

"Young in years, my dear boy, I grant," said Charley, fixing his features in an absurd parody of gravity, "young in years; but old in—wisdom! Don't I look it, now?"

"Not a bit of it, old boy, so don't flatter yourself!"

And the two boys, for boys they were, laughed together, and Sir Harry forthwith forgave the slight to his youth, his most tender point; as everybody always did forgive Charley everything.

The ball began to go not quite so merrily. Lord and Lady Powerscourt had gone. Miss

Vane and Miss Bellairs had gone ; numbers more had gone ; the Incomparables were going ; Lady Upton was longing to go, but she would not leave Sir Harry for the night, though they had begged her to do so, and there was no getting him away, not even when the poor ball flagged unmistakeably, and there were very few left indeed. No, he would see the last of it.

And very soon the last came, and his tired mother hurried him away with hardly time for a good-night to his sister and Mr. Warfield ; and Isabel and her husband were left alone, Miss Warfield having retired some little time before ; when the Incomparables went, in fact.

When her mother and Sir Harry left the room Isabel sank on the nearest seat ; Mr. Warfield went and sat by her.

“ You look pale, love, and tired,” he said.

“ I don’t think I am tired, Gerald ; and it has been delightful ; but, perhaps, it is the room. It looks so desolate with the withered flowers lying about ; and look how many there are crushed on the floor ! and the candles have burned so low, too ; somehow it makes one feel wretched ! ”

“ Woeful transformation of my bright, fairy

room! See what time does—and so short a time! My dear child, you are over-tired, come away; the candles won't have burned down everywhere; or, if they have, we will soon have more. Come."

And the ball was over.

CHAPTER XVI.

PARLIAMENT was sitting, and Mr. and Mrs. Warfield had therefore been obliged to leave the quiet country life which had been so dear to them both, and go up to Town, leaving Warfield Chase and Miss Warfield to relapse into their former stillness; though the old dreary look of the house had vanished, and Miss Warfield showed more life; an unhappy, restless life; still it *was* life, and, even when left alone, she could not subside into her former apathy.

It had been no will of hers that she had been so left, but it had been her brother's will; he wanted his wife to be with himself alone, and his sister knew it, though no words were spoken, and knew that it would be useless for her to propose going; so she kept silence, feeling herself refused and rejected, and laid up yet another grudge against Isabel, the chosen one.

This absence from home of his sister and her husband was a great loss to Sir Harry, and a great misfortune. He begged his mother to take a house in Town, and let them go together; but she laughed at him, and refused point blank. She to go running after Isabel, or help him to do it, when their separation had been her great hope in the marriage! She would not hear of it. So, as his home held now literally nothing to attract him, he would not stay there; and his dining even with his mother soon became a rarity. There were very many houses open to him where he met the warmest welcome; but what he cared for most was the society of the Incomparables, especially of Charley Dobree, and the two soon became almost inseparable. This society was about the last his mother would have chosen for him, and many and fierce were their quarrels on the subject. She could not keep him away from them, but she did the next best thing, or the worst; she absolutely refused to receive them, or any of them.

He went often, too, to Bellairs Park; he liked Flora and Miss Millicent Vane, and would

sometimes sit with them quietly for hours, reading or talking; chiefly of Isabel. Then, they did not speak against his friends, but invited them frequently; as did all the neighbourhood, except his mother; indeed, he oftener met some of them at dinner than not.

And they were very pleasant, those dinners at Bellairs Park: lively, easy, and refined; few could have found anything to wish, either as to society, or service. But to the eager boy they were tame, indeed, beside the mess-dinners; there he heard tales of the life he loved to picture to himself, the life he longed for; and his blood leaped in his veins as he listened to quiet anecdotes casually told, involving risk of life and limb, and showing a daring and coolness in the actors, which must have struck any one but themselves, and seemed to the inexperienced boy the height of heroism.

Ah! how he longed to be one of them! Longed for their daring, their coolness, and their dash, longed for everything that was theirs; even their very vices seemed to him nobler than those of other men. And when the fun waxed fast and furious, and jest and

repartee flew from lip to lip, who more ready to listen and to laugh than Sir Harry? soon, who more ready to speak?

And his mother thought to force him from this brilliant company to meet her only, and hear, instead of wit—no miracle, but reprimands and lectures. Truly her efforts were, and must remain, pure labour in vain.

This society did not, perhaps, do him much good, though it is surely well for a man to learn to mix with his fellows; but it had certainly done him no harm until one unlucky day that his mother caught him on his way out, and upbraided and menaced him in the hall, in the hearing of more than one servant; as he knew. His exasperation was extreme; and as he hurried along he kept brooding over her sayings, and adding to them grievance upon grievance out of his past life, till all his spirit was stirred to wrath and bitterness. He was unusually silent at dinner, and let the talk flow past him almost unheeded;—but he drank a great deal of champagne. At dessert Colonel Fitzgerald told the story of a lion hunt, in which he had been engaged; where a native had been rescued in the creature's very paws

by a wonderful shot from a man in the 17th Lancers; but Harry, who would generally have been the most eager of listeners, hardly heard him; he still sat quiet, drinking more wine.

After a time, the Colonel and some others went away; and the party who were left drew to one end of the table, as they did not seldom; being, though so very different, sworn friends and companions. They were Major Delisle, Captain Johnstone, Sir Frederick Popham, Lieutenant Marston, and Charley Dobree, with Sir Harry;—whose eyes were getting very bright, and his face flushed.

“And how’s old Must. after his ablutions, Pop? cantankerous?” said Charley, as he cracked a walnut.

“Pooah old fellah! He was not amiable—quite!” answered Sir Frederick, “but you see it was an awful grind for him to have that common boy to wash him. He’s all wight now, though.”

“The crabbed old sinner, how he did snarl! and you, Pop;—you don’t know how touching you were bending over the bath with charming solicitude, like a sweet Mamma superintending her darling’s tubbing!” said Charley, laughing.

"Well, what's a fellah to do, I'd like to know? Sharpe wouldn't touch him, and *he* wouldn't let the boy touch him;—not without me over him."

"Why, Pop," said Charley, "you might hang him, you know; *his* killing would be no murder."

"Hang Musty! O Lord, Charley, you quite upset a fellah! I'd sooner hang myself!"

"Get rid of Sharpe, then," said Delisle, "I suppose your feelings would stand that?"

"Ya'as, he's an impudent beggar. The idea of him being too good to touch Musty! Why, he's a deal the best bred of the two! O ya'as, I'd give him the sack, I don't care a damn about *him*;—it's the blacking."

"The *what*, Sir Frederick!" cried Harry, "surely you didn't say blacking!"

"Ya—as I did; and they all know it well enough. There's not a man in England got such blacking; and he makes it all by himself, and won't let a soul see him. Oh! in blacking and tops he beats all the fellahs I evaw had, beats them to fits! I weally couldn't part with the blacking;—and the wascal knows it."

"Undeceive him, then," said Major Delisle.

"Give him the sack, and he'll be glad enough to touch the dog, or half-a-dozen dogs; and then you'd have the blacking, and Musty washed without a row."

"Well, I might—but no—I daren't wisk it. He's devilish touchy, you see, about what he calls his honour, and all that,—I weally daren't wisk it. Oh! I say!—Do *you* want the blacking, Beauty?"

"Thanks, my precious Pop!—but I flatter myself that *my* chief attraction does not lie in my boots!"

"Ah, well! But boots are a gweat thing! a vewy gweat thing!—and then, you know, *you* are a clevaw fellah!"

"No help for you, you see, poor old Pop! You must do the maternal. You'll let a fellow know when it's coming off again?" said Charley.

"O, let's have him in, Sir Frederick; do, he's such fun!" said Sir Harry.

"Like master—like dog!" from the Major.

"O, thanks! Stoph, no end! You do me pwoud," said Sir Frederick. "He's so awfully near perfect, is Must., I feel—ah—more than I can expwess! Ya'as, Sir Harry, we'll have

him if you like,—only, Charley, old boy, don't you chivey him about so; it'll come hard on him to-day, you know."

And Sir Frederick rose and rang the bell, and sent for Mustard—no unusual summons.

"O, I'll be most merciful, Pop, I vow," said Charley; "but, really, you know, he won't be perfect, till he has learned to drink wine; and it's not *my* fault that he runs at sight of the glass!"

Enter Mustard.

Now Mustard merits a special introduction.

He was a high-bred dog, a very prince of dogs—an Incomparable; and held to the privileges of his rank as well beseemed him. He was a rough, hairy, little Scotch terrier—yes, alas! he was little!—of a sort of light fawn colour, which merged into drab on his chest: a wonderfully broad chest and body he had, and the shortest of legs; and a fine, fierce little head, out of which looked two bright, sharp eyes, which softened into an expression of devoted love, all but human, when they rested on his master; with one of the warmest little hearts that ever beat in a dog's breast. He was the bravest, fiercest, silliest little creature,

and would have attacked a lion without the smallest hesitation. What he loved the best in all the world, was his master; he had many subordinate likings—delicate eating and luxurious ease, for instance; but he sacrificed them without a thought to the delight of being with him. His greatest abhorrence was travelling, sea travelling above all; and he might be seen on the eve of a journey sitting among the packages, the picture of misery. But when the carriage came round, it was Mustard who entered it first, and he boarded boats and ships with equal readiness and determination. He would face all earthly ills, even sea-sickness, to which he was a martyr, but he would *not* leave his master while the breath was in his body.

Poor old Mustard! And yet even he was not perfect. Aristocratic exclusiveness, jealousy, and irritability, were his bane. He thought no dog had a right to be bigger nor stronger than he; and if he saw one who happened to be so, attacked him forthwith. Then his jealousy was outrageous. Woe to the animal caressed by his master, unless he were expressly forbidden to touch it—when he would sit at a distance looking at it in gloomy discontent, and

if ordered to come near it, would do so with an expression of disgust and loathing wonderful to behold. And he was an aristocrat. Ill-dressed men were very liable to a snap from him, and he utterly declined to eat in a kitchen; or, indeed, anywhere from a servant's hand, except in his apartments; if his bone were taken out into the corridor, he immediately fetched it back, with the air of an insulted prince, and did not attempt to gnaw it until placed under the sofa, his favourite dining-place.

He came in now, wagging his tail, with the air of being thoroughly at home. As he entered, Charley Dobree left his chair next Sir Frederick and took one lower down.

"There's a chair for mamma's darling," he said. "Hey, Musty, up with you!"

And Mustard jumped up and sat there with a gravity and decorum worthy of a bishop.

"But how the deuce did *you* happen to be present at the darling's ablutions, Charley," said the Major. "Were you officiating nursemaid?"

"Baby's papa, more likely; I believe papas do find such sights interesting—and I did. No, Pop and I had ridden out, meaning to go

to Bellairs Park, but we met Miss Millicent and Miss Bellairs just outside Bransford, so we thought we'd come back and have a shy at the billiards; consequentially we were not expected."

"Pass the bottle, Charley," said Captain Johnstone.

"Now, I call that unkind! as if the flow of my wit was not better than any wine!"

"Live in hopes, Charley; it may be—when we see it!" said Delisle.

"Serve you wight, Charley," said Sir Frederick, laughing, "you shouldn't go and split on a fellah. *I'd* have said it if I could."

"No, now, Pop! that hurts! that's too cruel. I am crushed."

"O, bother! Charley," said Sir Harry, "go on."

"Well, as I was saying, when I was so unceremoniously and, I must say, so unfeelingly interrupted by the person on my left,"—"Bosh!" from the Captain,—*"On the contrary!"* continued Charley, "but, as I was saying, we were not expected; and as we approached Pop's quarters, our ears were assailed by a hideous noise,—a compound of

growling, entreaty, barking and scolding. Pop rushed forward in horror, and flung open the door, exclaiming in accents of stern determination,—

“ ‘What the deuce is all this row about?’

“I rushed after him, and there we stood, transfixed, gazing on a scene,—oh! such a scene! Before the fire was a bath, between the bath and the sofa crouched Sharpe; on his knees, close to the sofa, was a stable-boy, trying to coax Must. to let him get hold of him; and under the sofa, backed close against the wall, was the said Must., his eyes all aflame,—snarling and barking, and greeting the boy's hand, when put forward to touch him, with a sudden snap;—whereupon he jerked it back, naturally.

“The tableau was sublime, but momentary.

“Musty rushed right out, over the boy, and leaped and frisked about Pop; and Sharpe sprang up, looking disconcerted,—yes, he did, positively; and the wretched boy, having shuffled to his feet, stood, shifting nervously from one to the other, and looking helplessly at the carpet—the picture of misery. Oh, if you could but have seen them! Wasn't it grand, Must.? eh, old fellow?”

And Musty wagged his tail, affirmatively, and looked as if he knew all about it; while Charley joined in the general laugh.

"That's Musty, all over," said Major Delisle; "he'd hold a dozen at bay, little as he is."

"Little?" cried Charley; "Lor, he thinks himself a perfect monster of size and strength! Why it's only the other day he attacked three big dogs together; the least would have made six of him—wouldn't he, Pop?"

"O ya'as, he don't mind size—and he's wight, mostly; he can hold his own against any *weasonable* odds, but they were unweasonable, that time. He'd got them all three on top of him; and if we had not gone to the wescue, he'd have been as dead as mutton in two minutes. And Lord! how savage he was coming home afterwards! He snapped and snarled at evewy dog he saw, even the little ones; and he don't notice them, as a wule."

"Well," continued Charley, "there was Mustard, the Magnificent, under his master's protection, breathing defiance against his foes; while Sharpe began to apologise.

" 'Beg pardon, Sir Frederick,' he said; 'but I thought you was out for hours.'

" 'But what the deuce is it all about? What's

this boy here for? You were never going to try to thrash Mustard? Hey, sir?’

“And if you’d seen old Pop, then! I wouldn’t have been Sharpe, if he *had* indulged such notions.

“‘Oh, dear, no! Sir Frederick; not by no means,’ said Sharpe, quickly; ‘it’s for his bath, Sir Frederick: see, it’s there, ready. But I really couldn’t demean myself to wash a dog, as your late gentleman did; and so, Sir Frederick, as you have repeatedly eluded to his want of cleanliness, I took the hopportunity of your absence to employ this boy; and me and him we’ve been a coaxing of him all ways,—for a hour, I should say; and we couldn’t even get hold of the obstinate little—beg pardon, Sir Frederick,—we couldn’t get him in.’

“How Pop laughed! and so did I; it was as good as a play. ‘Bravo, old Must.!’ he said; ‘did they insult him, then!’ And Must. wagged his tail violently, and looked in defiance and triumph at his persecutors,—prematurely, alas! For Sharpe could in no wise be prevailed upon to perform the operation; and so Pop, after pulling his whiskers nearly off, took him up, and with his own hands placed him in the bath and stood over him,—I say, old Musty,

do you know you looked awfully like a drowned rat!—while the trembling boy soaped and scrubbed him, in mortal terror. And that's a true and correct history of how Pop came to do the maternal, and how I came to see him. Lo! is not Musty there to prove it?"

"Really, Charley, almost an epic," said Major Delisle; "why don't you celebrate the heroic resistance and ultimate defeat, by Destiny, in the shape of Pop, in heroic verse? You say your Muse is always wanting to soar;—here's a chance!"

"And why shouldn't he celebrate it, either in verse or prose, if he likes, Major Delisle," said Sir Harry.

"Oh, no reason in the world," said the Major, looking at him in cold surprise, "if he can."

But Harry only grew hotter.

"Can! of course he can! he can do anything he likes."

"Ah!" said the Major, "clever boy! Let him like to do this, then. *I* have no objection; nay, I will even go so far as to say, I'll stay and hear it."

"Sing us a song about it, Charley," said Sir Harry, eagerly; "I know you can,—in ten minutes, if you like!"

"Yes, Charley, sing," said Lieutenant Marston, who had been very busy with his walnuts. "Here's another child that says you can, and no mistake."

"Well, I don't mind, as Delisle's so awfully kind; I'll try to gratify him."

"A pony to a fiver that Charley don't do it!"

"Double it, Major," cried Harry, "and I'm your man."

"O, with pleasure!" replied the Major. "Two ponies, then, to a tenner?"

"All right," said Sir Harry; "and he's to finish in ten minutes. Who'll time it? You, Captain Johnstone?"

Captain Johnstone nodded, and took out his watch.

"One moment, Mums," said the Major, "I'll give him twenty minutes."

"Stop, Charley," said Lieutenant Marston, "if you take it, you are lost; you can do it in ten; you can't in twenty."

"Ten, then, be it," said Charley, laughing; "I'll go to the other end of the room, all alone by myself, and muse in solitude, and Mums shall say when time's up."

He went at once, and, when seated, said,—

"Now, old fellow."

"All right," answered Captain Johnstone.

A silence fell over the party, only Sir Harry said in a low tone to Lieutenant Marston,—

"Don't you think he'll do it?"

"Certain sure," replied he; "but he wouldn't if he'd had longer. You see he would have begun to mend, and alter, and that, and lost himself."

Sir Frederick pulled his own whiskers and Musty's ears, and told him "he was a howwid little bwute to have made all this wow!" Whereupon he assented, as usual.

"Time's up," said the Captain.

"So am I," said Charley, coming back to the table, "boiling over, positively;—no stipulation as to quality, you know, Beauty."

"Mon cher, on ne demande pas l'impossible, —at least, *I* don't."

"Which is a blessing—especially to your honourable self,—'cause as how you wouldn't get it, mon ami! But, gentlemen all, I'm a going for to sing the true and veritable history of the jolly dog of Bransford—which he sits there—leastways of the washing thereof—here goes:—

"A jolly little dog lived in Bransford town,
And a jolly little dog was he,—Oh!
His master he went out, and left him at home,
To his great astonishment and woe,—Oh!

"As he sat by himself, and mused on his Fate,
And thought, 'Oh! how could he serve me so,—Oh!'
Two monsters came in, and his wrath it was great,
When he saw that they bore bath and soap,—Oh!

"'Now, dear little Mustard,' said Sharpe, the sublime,
Which his name I forgot to tell you,—Oh!
'Do come and be washed, it'll make you look fine!'
Said Mustard, 'Don't you wish? It's no go,—Oh! Oh!'

"Leastways he snapped, and he barked, and he growled,
And entrenched himself under the sofy,—Oh!
Man and boy on the floor, they begged and prayed and swore;
But he only showed his teeth, and snarled, Bow, wow,—Oh! Oh!

"The door it opened wide, and he sprang o'er his foes,
And into his dear master's arms,—Oh!
But here his sad Fate, I weep while I relate,—
The traitor put him into the Tub,—Oh! Oh!"

"Bravo, Charley!" cried Sir Harry; and
"bravo!" cried Sir Frederick; and every-
body,—even the Major.

"Not bad, Charley," he said, "though you
have done me out of two ponies; not bad for
the time."

"Look at old Must.!" said Lieutenant Mar-
ston, "isn't he great! he knows every word,
you may depend! eh, old hero? Well, he has

all the heroic qualifications,—even to walking on two legs!”

“Nay, Fanny, you forget, he’s no boots!”—from Delisle.

“Boots? What boots it? Boots, or no boots.—Come, my hero,” and he held up to him a piece of cake, “show us how you can walk.”

Mustard leaped off his chair, and going to afar corner, proceeded to jump along on his hind legs to the Lieutenant.

“But you see the heroic posture is not natural to him, and he can’t sustain it long,” said Major Delisle; “besides, he wants bribing.”

“Eh, Stoph! Do I hear aright? Is that *you*? Why, what hero does not want bribing? Don’t we all want our bit of cake, and mostly get it, too? And, now, Stoph, I put it to you, who is a hero in his nightcap?”

“Antediluvian, Fanny! there’s no such thing!”

“Well, then, in his night-shirt; or without, if you prefer it. The forked radish is by no means imposing in himself, I take it; it takes a deal of scarlet and gold, or velvet and ermine, as the case may be, to the making of a hero!”

"Right you are," said Captain Johnstone.

"Very near the mark, Fanny; but might one ask when you read Carlyle?" said the Major.

"O, one day, when by a curious concatenation of circumstances, I was shut up absolutely without supplies; but, after all, it's not so bad," replied the Lieutenant.

"No, he's not bad—not *exactly*, Fanny!—but it's a real blessing that most of our fellow-creatures are not so clear-sighted," said the Major, laughing; "they see the scarlet and gold,—and believe the rest; which has the advantage of leaving us all heroes, eh, Pop?"

"Oh come now, you know, that's wot!" said Sir Frederick, "*we* ain't hewoes, not a bit of it! When we've got anything to do, we just do it;—that's all!"

"Why, that's the whole duty of man! my modest Pop," replied the Major. "At least it would be, *if* we did all we had to do; which we don't."

"It stwikes me we're getting awfully dull," said Sir Frederick; "Come into my quarters, will you, and let's do some whist? You will be one of us, Sir Harry, I twust?"

Now, Sir Harry had had such an invitation more than once before and declined it, knowing next to nothing of cards, and having no money to lose; but now, excited by wrath, wine, and the winning of fifty pounds, he accepted eagerly; and they moved in a body to Sir Frederick's rooms.

"I say, Fanny, brew us some punch, will you?" said Sir Frederick.

"Oh! for goodness' sake, don't begin punch yet, Pop," said the Major; "let's have a rubber first."

"Yes," said the Lieutenant, "let's have a rubber, and then I'll make the brew."

"All right; as you like. You'll play whist, Sir Harry?"

Sir Harry, who was ready for anything, would have accepted this also; but Charley, knowing what vials of wrath would be poured on his ignorant head, or treasured up against him, interposed for his friend's rescue.

"Oh! Sir Harry and I will play *écarté*," he said, "you four ancients can do the whist."

"Ancients, indeed!" said the Major, "I like that!" And the others laughed; being farther

removed from any suspicion of age, they found the imputation more amusing.

They played steadily and quietly, casting an impatient glance towards the boys, when interrupted by a burst of merriment from their table.

When the first rubber was over, Lieutenant Marston made the punch, and the others stood about, looking on.

"What a splendid bwew that was you made on Tuesday, Fanny," said Sir Frederick,— "don't you wemember? We'd been shooting in Warfield's pweserves?"

"*He's* not got so many pheasants as I have," put in Sir Harry,— "come and see them," he added hastily, catching a smile of Major Delisle's, and forgetting all prudence. "The season's all but out; come to-morrow; that will make six of us, and won't old Dobson be delighted! and dine with us;—do!"

"With pleasure!" said the Major, "I have heard great things of the Upton preserves."

"Nothing I like better than potting an old cock! thanks, Sir Harry,"—said the Lieutenant,—and so said they all; while Sir Harry

listened with mingled feelings; to have asserted himself at last, to have the Incomparables accepting *his* invitation, was delicious; but then, visions of his mother loomed before him and obscured the brilliant future: on the whole he would willingly have resigned his triumph, but it was too late.

The whist players returned to their whist, and were even quieter after the punch than before; but Sir Harry became noisy, and insisted on higher and higher stakes, and mostly won them; as by some strange chance beginners will; a device of the Evil One, may be.

Twelve struck, and Mustard, who had been sitting yawning on the hearth-rug, got up and stretched himself, and indicated plainly that he thought it was time to go to bed.

The Major and Captain Johnstone thought so, too; and as soon as the rubber was ended, they each took a cigar and went, while Sir Frederick and Lieutenant Marston drew to the other table and looked on.

Sir Harry's eyes were blazing with excitement, and his hands trembled.

"I say," he said, "let's have lansquenet."

"But you don't play lansquenet?" said Sir Frederick, doubtfully.

"No, old boy," said Charley, rising, "we'll play no more to-night; it's morning now, and we shan't hit a feather if we go on; besides, your mother will be in a great state of mind about you."

The allusion was unfortunate.

"I ain't a baby, Charley," said Sir Harry, angrily, "and you needn't treat me like one. I shall stay and play, whether you do or not. As for not knowing lansquenet, there's nothing to know; I know *that*. Let's have some more punch, Sir Frederick, and a turn at lansquenet."

"Well, my son, well, you'll have a jolly headache to-morrow, I promise you!" said Charley, "but needs must, I suppose, when—"

And more punch was made, and they sat down to lansquenet, and drank as they played.

Unwilling at first, and specially unwilling to win money from the boy, though thinking, naturally enough, that he had much at command, the rapid excitement soon carried them away, the demon of play took possession for

the time, and they sat with flushed faces, and eager, lustful eyes, watching the turning of the cards, as though their lives had hung upon the issue.

Sir Harry had sat down to *écarté*, having won £50 from Major Delisle; he won ten more from Charley, then fifty at *lansquenet*. Then the tide turned and he lost, and lost, and lost : and when the grey dawn came creeping in, he rose up from the table with haggard face and bloodshot eyes; a loser of £200.

Sir Frederick wanted to rouse his men, and send him home in his brougham, but he would not hear of it; neither would he stay, but insisted on walking off at once. Charley, much against his will, went with him; fearing that he would be altogether incapable when once in the open air. But it was not so. And Charley, finding that he could take care of himself, and that it was impossible to get a word out of him, left him and turned back, feeling somewhat less satisfied with himself than was his habit. His final reflection was, however, consolatory. "I don't see how we could have helped it, though; he *would* do it, the young muff!"

Meantime the young muff walked home, sobered; his head racked by pain, by his rash invitation, and the thought of the £200. Bob was on the watch, and let him in by a side door.

"Get me some soda-water and brandy, Bob," he said. "I shall have a cold bath, and dress."

"Don't do that, now, Sir Harry, don't let my lady see you like that—you looks awful, Sir Harry,—do go to bed for a while."

"Get the soda-water, Bob, and don't be a fool!" was the angry reply.

"I can't get it, Sir Harry, not till Barker is up, and that won't be for this hour, yet."

"Go and wake him, then, only get it."

"Please, Sir Harry, I daren't; besides, he'd tell my lady."

"Let him tell the devil! So I can't even get a bottle of soda-water in my own house. Are you going, you confounded fool, or must I go myself?"

"O, Sir Harry! Of course, if you order me; only, I thought—"

"Damn it, go!"

And poor Bob went, sighing as he went; and after much abuse got what he wanted, and

returned with it to his master; and prepared his bath, and helped him in all possible ways, with no wages for that time but hard words.

Sir Harry was down, ready to breakfast with his mother, at half-past eight.

She just glanced at his pale face as she came in, then smiled bitterly, saying,—

“It is, unfortunately, easy to account for your early appearance, Harry.”

“True, mother, I have not been to bed. I wanted to speak to you as soon as possible.”

“Will you wait till after breakfast?—as I can hardly hope it is anything pleasant.”

“Mother! You drive me wild!”

“What! you can’t even wait until I have breakfasted to begin your usual abuse!”

Sir Harry set his teeth, crossed the room, and rang for the coffee.

Mother and son breakfasted in absolute silence, or, rather, Lady Upton breakfasted, while Sir Harry tried again and again to take different things, but turned away with loathing.

At length Lady Upton had finished.

“Now, sir,” she said, “if it must be, come into the library.”

He followed her with ever-increasing ex-

asperation, and when she had seated herself, stood a little way off, with one hand on the table, and turned to her a face so resolute, that had she been a physiognomist she must have paused, and considered.

"Mother," he said, "I want some money, £200; will you let me have it?"

"What is it for?"

"I do not wish to say. I must have this,—but give it me and I will take care not to have to ask again."

"You have been playing, then, and lost? that was your night's work! Well, tell me all the truth about it, and this time you shall have it,—but not a penny till I know."

"Then, mother, you will never know; for I will not tell you."

"Then you don't have the money."

"Remember, it's my own, mother."

"Not to fling to cheats and sharpers."

"That's enough. One thing more. I have asked Major Delisle, Sir Frederick Popham, and three other of their fellows, to shoot pheasants to-day, and dine here afterwards."

"Have you, indeed? Then let me tell you, Sir Harry Upton, you have undertaken what

you can't perform, in more ways than one. They will *not* dine here; and if you won't do it, I shall send an excuse myself."

"That is your final determination, mother? Remember, I *have* asked them,"

—"Knowing that I had said they should never come. It is."

"Then hear mine. I have borne this tyranny too long. At an age when I might do things worthy of a man, I am bullied like a school-boy. I can't ask my own friends—men whom any one may be proud to see—to my own house; it *is* my own house: well, until I can, I enter it no more. Good bye, mother,—and God send you a better mind! I will spare you the degradation of writing, I will do it myself. Sudden business shall call me to Town; and *my* excuse will have the advantage of being true."

"You do well to talk of manliness, you! Raving like a passionate child. You will go to Town will you, and live there, too, I suppose,—on what? Go, boy. Talk of a schoolboy!—you are but a baby!"

"Good bye, mother. Will you shake hands?"

"Well, I never have refused your hand,

Harry, and I won't now; but it's a mere farce. You will come to your senses before the day is out."

"Good bye, again, mother," he said, as they shook hands. "I must go and send a note directly, or it will be too late."

He went quietly to his room, and wrote immediately the following note:—

"DEAR MAJOR DELISLE,

"I am awfully sorry that I am suddenly called to Town on urgent business; so that I cannot have the pleasure of seeing you to-day. May I ask you to tell the rest of the party, as I fear to lose time in writing several notes? I *do* write to Sir Frederick.

"Always sincerely yours,

"HARRY UPTON."

This was written rapidly. The next proved more difficult. He wrote, "Dear Sir Frederick," then sat biting his pen; while his face flushed and gathered a look of perplexity and distress. "Hang it," he exclaimed, finally, "it must be done." And he dashed off—

"I made an ass of myself last night. My mother's got the power, and she won't have you: she don't know what real good fellows you are. I have written to the Major, and said I am called to Town on urgent business; and I am going. I have no money. Will you lend me the £200 I lost last night, and £50 more to take me to Town? I'd like to say good bye, if you'll meet me at the station at three. I'm an awful fool, and I'd no right to get into such a hole; but I *am* in, and don't know who the deuce will pull me out, except you. And I have no right in the world to count on you; but I do.

"Faithfully yours,

"HARRY UPTON."

He told Bob to send a man off at once with these two notes, and to pack his things and have them at the station at three. Then he went to say good bye to Pearson, who cried to him, and begged him to stay, in vain. Then to some favourite dogs: and then he mounted his horse to ride to Bellairs Park.

"I'm to go with you, please, Sir Harry?"

said Bob, speaking with more assurance than he felt.

“No, Bob; you are too good for it. I wouldn’t have you on my conscience, for the world. I don’t know where I’m going: to the deuce, it’s more than likely.”

“O Sir Harry, I don’t mind where it is, not a bit! and I shouldn’t want no wages, and not much clothes for a long while: I’ve got two suits as good as new. Do take me, please, Sir Harry?”

“No, Bob, it’s all no use; you don’t go with me. You stop here in the stables, as you were till I took you. I shall come back some day; when I am of age, if not before. ‘There’s a good time coming,’ Bob,—remember that; and don’t look such an awful sheep.”

And he gathered up the bridle, and rode off at a quick trot, leaving Bob gazing disconsolately after him; and Pearson, too, leaning from a window, followed him with her eyes as long as he was in sight.

When he vanished, she drew herself in, and sighed heavily. “Poor lad,” she said, “poor lad! he *is* but a lad; and him going by himself into that awful, wicked London. The Lord

have mercy on him—for men will have none! as, how should they, when his own mother hasn't? Oh, my lady, my lady! there's many a day and many a deed you'll live to rue yet: and this 'll be one, for sure!"

Sir Harry reached the station twenty minutes before the train left, having spent the morning and lunched at Bellairs Park; and found Bob with his luggage, and Sir Frederick, there to meet him.

Sir Frederick came forward with outstretched hand.

"How are you, old fellah?" he said. "Awfully sowwy you've had a wow—about us, too!"

"Not a bit of it, Sir Frederick; it's been coming this long time—and now it's come."

"Ah! but,—shall we walk?" And he linked his arm in Sir Harry's, and they paced the platform together; and Sir Harry, despite all his discomfiture, had a delightful sense of the grandeur and glory of being so seen with a creature so splendid: he was but a boy, you know!

"You did quite wight to come to me," said Sir Frederick. "It's a pleasure, you know."

And he handed him the money in bank notes, in an envelope.

"You are too good, Sir Frederick," said Sir Harry, blushing painfully,—"and I'm awfully ashamed."

"My dear fellah, not a word! But,—you know I'm not a clevaw fellah—not at all; but,—aw,—I'm older, you see, than you. Now, about your mother, and going, and all that: if you won't mind my saying it,—*don't*. A mother may be a baw,—pprobably she is;—but then you see she *is* a fellah's mother, all the same—and you can't have another, you know! You've never twied what it is; but I know, when I'd that howwid fever in India, I thought if *I* could have had a mother!—Sir Harry, take my advice, and go back home."

"Never, Sir Frederick,—till I can see you and any other gentleman there, when and how I like! Home! It's no home to me; never has been, since Isabel left."

"Ah! sweet girl, vewy, your sister. But weally now, Lady Upton's wight: 'pon honour she is. We *are* a wascally set. Look how we won your money, last night; and the state you were in, you know! It's howwid stuff, that,

punch of Fanny's, and how should you know that?"

"Sir Frederick, you are very kind; awfully kind; but it's no use. My mind's made up; pray say no more."

"I feared I could do no good," said Sir Frederick, plaintively. "Now, if I'd been a clevaw fellah!"—and he sighed; then continued, as he took some letters out of his pocket, "so I bwrought you some introductions; they are all to good fellahs. Now, you know there are some of ours weally vewy black sheep. I've not given you letters to them, so you'll know. And you'll see your sister soon, won't you?"

"O, yes! I shall go to Isabel to-night or to-morrow."

"All wight. And when you get into a scwape—fellahs always *do* get into scwapes—it's a baw, but they do; write to me, as if I *were* your bwother; you know I know a thing or two, though I ain't a clevaw fellah,—and I'll see you through."

"I wish to heaven you were my brother, Sir Frederick! though you couldn't have done more if you had been. I shall never forget

your kindness as long as I live." And his voice trembled, and his eyes grew moist.

"Well, my dear fellah, think I *am* a bwother, and a bwother who's been in no end of scwapes, and wite to me consequentially."

"I will, Sir Frederick. Hark! isn't that the train?"

"Ya'as. Just look at Musty, he hears it well enough, and yet the sinner's as happy as Punch. How the Lord does he know I'm not going? He *does* know, I know."

"I'm off for my ticket, Sir Frederick."

"Ah, ya'as! Tickets are a baw; but must have tickets."

Bob came up to Sir Frederick, while his master was away.

"Beg pardon, Sir Frederick," he said, "for taking the liberty; but if you're likely to hear of Sir Harry in London, may I come now and then to see how he is? If you *would* be so good, Sir Frederick?"

"O, ya'as, my good fellah! come when you like."

"Thank ye, Sir Frederick, thank ye kindly. My eye! he's a sharp'un, that!" And Bob,

being a lover of dogs, eyed Mustard affectionately.

“Ya’as, wather! You shall see him with wats one day. By Jove *that* is a sight! He’s just lightning that can bite,—that’s what *he* is!”

“Yes, Sir Frederick, he looks it. It must be a rare treat to see him at work!”

The train glided into the station, Sir Harry rushed up, and jumped in. “Good bye,” and there was a hearty hand-grip between him and Sir Frederick. “I’m really off, you see. Good bye, old Musty! may your shadow never be less! Luggage all right, Bob? Well, then, good bye, poor old Bob! a good time coming, you know.” Then, leaning out of the carriage-window, as the train moved on, “Mind you look after Gip and Beauty, Bob; and ride Phillis yourself.”

And the express glided softly and swiftly out of the station, steady and rapid as Fate,—was it not a Fate?—bearing Sir Harry Upton, and many another—whither?

CHAPTER XVII.

ON a bright June morning Lady Upton sat looking on to a balcony filled with flowers in a house in Grosvenor Square; her own house for the time being.

She sat there, looking listlessly over the flowers, but not seeing them, and turning now and again a haggard, anxious face towards the door of the room, and the table, where lay the untasted breakfast. When it struck eleven she frowned, and, rising impatiently, rang the bell, and ordered the servant to see if Sir Harry were not ready. He returned almost immediately. Sir Harry begged her ladyship wouldn't wait—he shouldn't be down this hour.

But she *would* wait, she *would* be a martyr and a victim, even more than was necessary; and truly she had enough to bear without adding to the burden: still she did it, as in this

instance. Waiting to breakfast with him was one of the things that specially annoyed Sir Harry; and his mother, clinging as far as possible to her wilfulness, persisted in it always, the more that it was positive suffering to her.

She turned wearily to the window again, with drooping head and hands, looking what she was—beaten.

Great had been her surprise and mortification on finding that Sir Harry had really gone to London, but she held firm: weeks passed, and she had no letter from him, and Isabel spoke of him seldom, and with much reserve,—still she held firm: Mr. Warfield wrote without reserve, telling her that he was leading a wild, reckless life, that he had got into one of the worst and fastest sets in London, with those very black sheep against whom Sir Frederick had warned him,—still she held firm; thinking that his credit would soon be exhausted, and then he must perforce be driven home. At last, Mr. Warfield snatched a couple of days, and went down to see her; and begged her, as she valued his health of body, or soul, to come and take a house, and get him home—if they could.

Still she held firm: telling him her thought that the want of means would send him back.

He laughed at her; her hardness had hardened him, and he laughed.

"Want of means!" he said. "A baronet, in London, with £10,000 a year, and large accumulations! Can you possibly be serious? Do you not know that there are such things as Jews in London, Lady Upton?"

"Has he gone to the Jews?" and she turned a shade paler; then added quickly, "But he is a minor, his signature is invalid."

"The Jews have gone to him; and minor though he be, will trust a gentleman's honour, where there is so much to gain; of course they will make him pay for the risk; but, plainly, Lady Upton, they will let him have all the money he wants long enough, at least, to kill himself twice over."

"Hardly that, Mr. Warfield; you are excited; you forget; if they let him kill himself, they would get nothing: as a minor, his engagements are at least legally worthless, and could not bind his heirs."

"And can they not insure his life? Mind, I don't think they want to kill him; no, they

would much rather keep him alive. But living the life he does at his age *must* kill him, if it goes on. Money! Why, he has his hacks, and his brougham, and his mail phaeton; splendid rooms in St. James's Street, and—forgive me, Lady Upton, but you must know the truth—his villa in St. John's Wood; he is up all night, and in bed half the day; plays, and drinks, and smokes; and—is eighteen years old! A boy, Lady Upton, a child; surely you will come and try to rescue him?"

Lady Upton trembled as she sat in her chair, and grew very pale.

"Is all this literally true, Mr. Warfield?" she said.

"Literally true."

"Then I will come; as I have no other power. Oh! the passionate, headstrong fool! throwing to the winds what I have been heaping up for him all these years! Why have I not the power to shut him in a dungeon, and keep him there till he comes to his right mind!"

"Lady Upton, your own son; and he so young!"

"Old enough, Sir, to throw away the hope

and labour of my life, and make my name a by-word in the mouths of reprobates! But talking is useless; I will go back with you to-morrow, and do what may be done. It would be best to get him away from London."

"Believe me, it is vain to dream of such a thing; your only chance is to have a house—and try to get him to live in it, and so wean him from some of his worst habits;—but great gentleness will be required, very great gentleness."

"You talk strangely, Sir. What could a woman do for her son that I have not done for mine? And I will do even this last thing; but I will *not* cry to him and pet him! Pray say no more, it is perfectly useless. I have acted for myself all these years, and I shall still act as seems good to me."

Mr. Warfield bowed, and was silent.

The two uncongenial companions went to Town together next day, and Lady Upton immediately sent for her man of business, to inquire about a house. He had this one in Grosvenor Square, just offered to be let, all furnished as it stood, for a term of two years; she took it at once, and went into it the next day.

But to get Sir Harry into it was quite another thing. For some days she could not even see him, though she went repeatedly to his rooms;—he was not up; or, he was out. At last, one day, he came to her; flinging himself from his phaeton at her door, and carelessly throwing the reins to the smallest of tigers. *This* was not the boy who had left her a few short months ago; he astonished and frightened her. As to coming to live with her, the object of his greatest ambition, *then*; he now refused point blank; and it was only after many entreaties from Isabel, and having made various stipulations as to freedom of action and hours, that he finally consented. He knew his power now, thought it even greater than it was; and was no longer to be awed in any degree by his haughty mother.

He lounged slowly into the room about twelve o'clock, and with a cool, "Ah! you're there yet, mother, good morning!" rang the bell and then seated himself at the table.

"Good morning, Harry," said his mother, coming forward and seating herself, too, "how late you are again; really, you might oblige

me in this one thing, you know I always like to breakfast early."

"And why didn't you?" said he, coolly, "I'm sure you would oblige *me* if you would, and save me these eternal complaints."

His mother looked at him and sighed. It was a face to sigh at. Pale, as on that wretched day when he left home, but ah! how different! Its fair beauty blurred now by marks of habitual late hours and dissipations, older and harder, with even some lines about the corners of the mouth and on the forehead. A slight moustache just marked the upper lip, and looked all too young for the face above it. Handsome Harry Upton, still. Undoubtedly handsome; indeed, his name amongst his pet companions was, "Handsome Hal." But the beauty was not a beauty to please a mother's eye; and his mother, as she looked at him, sighed.

He made an impatient movement, and flung down the paper he had just taken up.

"Now, mother, I'm not going to sit here to be sighed at, any more than preached at; if I may have my breakfast in peace, I'll stay; if not, I'll go and get it elsewhere."

“Harry, for shame, your temper gets worse and worse; there will be no living with you soon.”

“And I just don’t want anybody to live with me,—though, as for my temper, nobody finds it out but you!”

“No, I suppose you reserve your greatest amiabilities for your mother,” she said bitterly, “man-like, you take advantage of the love you are sure of.”

“Well, I’m glad you admit at length that I am a man in anything; but that’s not true, mother, and you know it. Who loves me more than Izzy, and do I take advantage of her? Did I not come to live here to please her?—And a damned fool I was to do it!” he muttered to himself.

“Isabel, Isabel, always Isabel!” said Lady Upton, “all for her, and nothing for me! And what has she done for you? Has she saved, and lived, and hoped, for nothing in the world but you?”

“She’s loved me, and she’s not thwarted me;—but I’m off, there’s no chance of a breakfast here, I see.—Ta-ta, mother.” And he rose and went to the door.

"And you will go like this, and I shan't see you again till to-morrow! O, Harry! you are very cruel!"

"Well, mother," he said, standing irresolutely by the door, "why do you drive at a fellow so everlastingly? I would stay fast enough, if you would but let me alone."

"Well, come back, then, and I will say no more."

And he came back, and during breakfast kept dropping bits of gossip about the Opera, and Lady This and Lord That, and giving his mother some of the "on dits" of the clubs, with great coolness and suavity, while she listened with repressed annoyance.

When it was over she asked him to go with her to the Royal Academy.

"O Lord, mother!" he said, "Why, there's not a soul there, now. That's all over, ages ago."

"But I want to see that picture of Landseer's, again."

"Then call for Izzy, *she'll* go anywhere you like,—or pick up anybody: it's miles too slow for me."

"What are you going to do, Harry?"

“O, I think I shall toddle down Bond Street. I want to get a pin like Courtney’s, and I am to look at a hack of Sweepington’s; and then—why, perhaps I shall ride.”

“You dine at Mr. Warfield’s?”

“Why no; he’s such an awful, stuck-up fellow, and they are all such old fogies there; I can’t stand it often—and I went last week.”

“Then dine at home, with me.”

“Well, you see, I would;—but—to tell you the truth, mother, I am engaged.”

Lady Upton looked at him inquiringly; she would have liked to ask him where he was going, but did not dare: so far had their relative positions changed.

He saw the question in her eyes, and laughed lightly as he said, “I’d tell you, mother, but it would give you no pleasure;—still,—you’d like to know? Well, I am to dine with Sweepington and some more of that set, and afterwards we go to the Opera; and then—why, there will be a supper. You shouldn’t have asked me, you see.”

“O Harry, Harry! for your own sake give up these men; they are notorious, amongst the worst in London.”

His face took a stern look, and he went close up to her. "And who sent me to them?" he said, "You. When I wanted those fellows down at Bransford, you were just as set against them, only then you'd the power, and now you have not:—and they were angels compared to these; you are right there: but you have done it, and it can't be undone. Why, their life that I used to long for, would be tameness itself to me now! No, you've set me on the road, I am fairly on it now, and on I go." He stopped suddenly, controlled himself by a great effort, and in an entirely different tone continued,— "So—'*vive la joie!*'—and, my dear Mamma, good morning!"

He left the room, and his mother leaned back in her chair, and groaned. "O Harry, Harry!" she cried, "you don't know how cruel you are! And going to destruction so fast, so very fast!—and I can do nothing to save you! O my boy, my boy!"

At another breakfast table on that same morning, sat Mr. Warfield and Isabel: a late breakfast too, for there had been long sittings at the House for several nights, and Mr. Warfield

had, at length, taken a couple of hours more sleep.

Nowhere is the habitual tone and temper of a family or individual so plainly shown as at breakfast. There are few disturbing outside influences, they have hardly had time to case themselves in the mask worn more or less by all ; and what they are, that they shew.

Judging by this rule, it must have been a happy life that Mr. Warfield and Isabel led at that time. Serene content was on both their faces ; and now and then a little rippling laugh broke from Isabel's lips, and found an echo on her husband's, as he looked at her fondly, and enjoyed the humour of the anecdote, or reminiscence, as much as she did herself.

He had grown young ; younger than he had ever been, and handsomer ; and no wonder, for happiness is a great beautifier, and can smooth away with magic power the traces of long years. And it *was* a happy life that these two led—a very happy life. It realised his dreams. This wife was the wife of his soul's imaginings ; and he thought, truly, that few mortals were so blest.

It was her delight to be with him; she would sit quiet for hours in his library working or reading while he wrote; or oftener, copying for him. She herself put fresh flowers in it every morning :—he loved flowers now; their sight and perfume seemed ever to bring to him something of his wife. She read his speeches, too, and understood his views; and her cheek flushed, and the dark eyes flashed again, when she saw the magic, “cheers,”—“loud cheers,” &c., &c. And she had made her mark in Society, too, this simple, quiet girl; she took her place as his wife, the woman he delighted to honour, and held it with dignity; and there was not a house in London whose doors did not open to her gladly. She might have reigned by her beauty a queen of Fashion, had she so willed it; but her heart was at home, and the homage passed her so unheeded, that it soon sought other shrines, and she remained admired and respected only; *not* celebrated: just what her husband would have had her.

She was all this: she satisfied him, mind, and heart, and soul, and what could man wish more? He was content, and thought himself blessed

among men; his heaven was found, and, as she had foreseen, he had no aspirations after any other.

And she? She was very happy, too. But her life was not all brightness. There was a dark spot on her sky, a heavy cloud always to her, though she covered it as best she might; her brother. She mourned over him; she entreated him with all wiles of love and tenderness; but she could not prevail; neither could she ever bring about any real sympathy between him and her husband. She found, too, that the latter could not bear to see her sad looks when she had been with Harry, and that though he did not chide *her*, he was colder still to Harry the next time they met: so, for both their sakes, she hid her trouble in her heart, and covered it with smiles. She had done what she could. She had even gone to her uncle, which none else had done; and, refusing to be repulsed, had told him all the truth, at least all she knew; and had prayed him with tears to interfere and save her brother.

That was soon after he came to Town, and perhaps it might then have been done; he might have accepted a Commission, and turned

his energies and his wild, young blood, to good account for his country and himself; as many another has done. But Mr. Upton would none of it. He laughed, and pished and pshawed; told her young men would be young men, and she knew nothing about it; and finally, as she persisted, got thoroughly angry, and abused both Sir Harry and his mother roundly;—as one would hardly have thought so fine a gentleman *could* do; and positively forbade her ever to mention Sir Harry's name to him again.

So, she had done what she could. Nothing remained but to watch, and hope and pray; and that she did: and to be willing to make any sacrifice for this brother beloved—and that she was. Yes, she would have offered even her own cherished happiness to save him from destruction, from coming misery and shame here;—and hereafter!—There she checked her thoughts, and turned away with a shudder, only feeling in her heart of hearts, “Anything to save you, Harry—anything!”

But now she sat opposite her husband, all smiles and brightness, her trouble hidden deep, so deep that none could have guessed its existence, unless it were from a shadow in the eyes,

a longing far-away look, which shewed when the face was quite still, and she had not spoken for a time. Towards the end of breakfast she sat silent for some minutes, while Mr. Warfield read to her from the paper, and then the shadow showed plainly; it was deeper than usual,—did she feel the present coming of a new trouble into her life? Who shall say?

Mr. Warfield looked up, and noticed it.

“Why, darling!” he said, “you look quite pale and worn all at once. What is it?”

“Oh, nothing, Gerald; but I do feel tired.”

“Yes, yes, you must be tired. These late hours don’t suit my wild flower; how glad I shall be when I can take her back! And you write too much for me—you shan’t do it any more.”

“O, Gerald! It’s not *that* I am sure! I wouldn’t give *that* up!”

“Then mind you keep your roses, young lady, or you surely shall. And now we will see what the post has brought us this morning.”

Since his marriage Mr. Warfield had never opened the letter-bag until after breakfast; he would have that dear home time all to them-

selves; pleasures and worries alike might wait and not intrude on that pleasure.

He poured out a heap of letters, and he and Isabel sorted them; then he took his, and she hers, and they sat down to read them.

One after another had been thrown aside with some casual remark; when, after reading one that seemed longer than the others, during which time her colour deepened, and a troubled excitement showed in her face, she suddenly exclaimed,—

“O, Gerald! And you never told me!”

“Told you what?” said Mr. Warfield, in a startled tone—startled, not alarmed—for what had he to tell?

“About your sister!”

Still he did not understand; he had banished that erring sister so far from his thoughts that she positively did not exist for him.

“Why, I know nothing about her; what is the matter? what has happened?”

“Gerald, I don’t mean Priscilla.”

He sprang up with an oath. “And has she dared!—dared to write to you?”

Then, as Isabel’s eyes took the wide look of

fear, and she trembled before him for the first time, he sat down again, and said quietly, but in a tone as hard as iron,—

“I had nothing to tell you, Isabel; I *have* no sister but one: that other disgraced herself, and is dead to us—dead. I had forgotten her. Burn that letter instantly, and never speak of her again.”

“O, Gerald! dear Gerald!—”

“Isabel!”

“Gerald, I must. I never begged to you before, you must hear me, Gerald. She is so poor, she says, and her husband is ill, and she has a little child—a very little child. Gerald! You will forgive her, and let me go to her?”

As she spoke his face had grown paler and sterner.

“Isabel,” he said, “how dare you? *You* go to *her*! If ever you did such a thing, I would never see you again—never. Burn the letter, and say no more.”

“Gerald!” and she sprang forward, and kneeled before him, “Don’t speak so, you will kill me. O, Gerald!” and she got hold of his hands, and looked up into his face with eyes in which big tears trembled, “I wouldn’t do a

thing you don't like; you know I never have done; but think of the baby, the poor little baby, that has never done anything—and we may have a baby some day!”

“Isabel, get up,” he said. “This is a farce—a farce that must end.” And he lifted her forcibly, and put her in a chair. “As for the baby, it is its mother's, let her look to it! It is not I who have said that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children! And hear me, once for all. It is the first command I have given you, I hope it may be the last. I forbid you ever to mention that woman's name; I command you to forget her; and now, this instant, before my eyes, to burn that letter; or, stay, you are trembling, give it to me.”

“Oh, no!” she said; “I can do it—I will;” and she pushed aside his outstretched hand with the one in which the letter was not, and rose and tottered to the fire. They always had a little fire in the mornings, even on hot days—it was a fancy, that it made it more home-like. She put the letter in the fire; but when she turned round and faced him again she was white to the very lips, and could hardly

reach the chair, in which she sank back, trembling.

He went up to her, and leaned over her, and would have comforted her.

"Don't tremble so, Isabel, my darling," he said; "I am not angry with *you*—not now. Of course you did not know; but you should not have persisted so, Isabel. However, it is all over now, and we will say no more about it."

And he put his arm round her, and would have kissed her, but she shrank from him.

His face flushed, and he drew back as if stung.

"Isabel! you shrink from me!"

"I am tired, Gerald," she said, "and you frighten me."

"Don't say that; *don't*, my darling. I will be careful, indeed I will; don't say I frighten you! You are angry with me,—that is it; but let us forget all about this unlucky morning. Come, Isabel, I must go; you won't let me go from you without a kiss—for the first time?"

She smiled faintly, and raised her head towards him; and he kissed her, and left the room.

When he had gone, she got up and went to the door to see that it was shut; then cast a furtive glance round the room, as she pulled a piece of paper out of her pocket, and looked at it eagerly.

"It *is* the right piece," she said; "I was so afraid I had not got the right piece; and she might never have written again. And the poor baby! O baby, baby! I *will* come to you and help you; as I hope God will help mine one day!"

And she put the paper carefully in her purse and walked steadily to her dressing-room, and locked her door. Then she kneeled on the floor, and laid her head on the sofa, and burst into passionate crying and smothered wails;—for lo! her idol had shown the feet of clay, and never, never more could be all gold to her!

In about half an hour she came out of the room, dressed for going out, and with her veil down. She ordered her carriage and drove to Pimlico, got out at the bottom of a narrow street, and was absent some half-hour; but the proceeding attracted no attention from her servants, as it was by no means the first time that she had visited a poor neighbourhood, and gone into houses alone.

And what joy she spread around in that one half hour! What hope and life she brought to the poor, worn woman, and sick, bright-eyed man; what promise for the little baby!

"But I would never have done it, never, if it had not been for them!" said Mrs. Vernon, looking sadly at the two, the old and the young, alike in one thing only—the pinched look of Want. Then she continued: "And so you have been able to persuade him? I thought nothing would on this side death;—and yet, I tried."

Isabel flushed painfully. "No," she said, "he does not know—he must not know."

Mrs. Vernon's face fell. "Then come no more, Mrs. Warfield, come no more; for he would never forgive you."

"I will be very careful," said Isabel, "but I shall come; he has no right to keep me away; I shall come and see my nephew. And please write sometimes to tell me how you are; and always, if I can do anything to help you. Oh! I wish I could take you home with me! for you are good, I am sure you are good!"

The sick man raised himself on his elbow,

and spoke with effort, while a patch of scarlet appeared on each cheek.

"Mrs. Warfield, if the angels are good, she is."

And the colour died out suddenly, and he sank back again, exhausted.

And Isabel drove thence to one or two shops; for must she not be able to say something, if Gerald asked her where she had been? And strange, tumultuous thoughts, were with her in the drive. A new light, and a terrible one, was shed on her husband's character; she thought of him with fear, and yet with a sort of pity; not that her love was dead, but the reverence and worship had died out of it: she loved him still, but she did homage to him no more.

And from that day a new life began for them both.

He felt the change without being able to define it; there was nothing tangible. Isabel would sometimes start and tremble at his sudden coming, it is true; would sometimes push a sealed note under several open ones, casting as she did it a furtive glance towards her husband; but these things he did not see. Still

they were there: deceit and fear had come between them; a subtle influence, ever at work, separating them, little by little, from day to day; and rooting in Mr. Warfield's heart an undefined feeling of jealousy. He felt that his wife had changed, that he was no longer all to her, that something had come between them; and that something he hated.

Still they loved each other. Only they no longer spent every possible minute together; by degrees they even grew rather to shun it, as Mr. Warfield took to watching for signs of what the something might be that had come between his wife and him. But this evil time was yet far off, only from that bright June morning it was ever on its way; creeping slowly, but oh! so surely, nearer and nearer.

When they went back in August to Warfield Chase, its shadow was plainly to be seen. Miss Warfield saw it the first day, the first hour, almost before they had crossed the threshold; saw it and smiled.

Smiled still more as the days and weeks sped on, and the shadow grew and deepened; smiled, and watched.

She found no difficulty now in breakfasting

with the two; and when little notes came to Warfield Chase, and were slipped quietly away, as in London, Miss Warfield kept her eyes on her plate, and did not smile—but she saw,—and when she was alone she smiled, and an evil light shone in her eyes. “I shall only have to wait!” she thought.

And soon at dinners, or evening parties, or gatherings of whatever kind, she saw that her brother had begun to watch; then, that he watched more particularly two men who were ever in attendance on Isabel, Sir Frederick Popham and Major Delisle; then, that he watched one, one only, Major Delisle. And again she smiled. “It is coming,” she thought, “coming fast.”

But, suddenly, when every one had quite given up hoping for him, Sir Harry came down. He was wearied, worn out, sick to death for the time of all the meretricious excitement in which he had been steeped; and he returned to the ways of his youth with a sensation of relief, and clung to his sister as to his salvation. So her eyes grew brighter and the smiles came oftener, and there was no chance for any attendant but Sir Harry.

And Mr. Warfield's brow lightened, and he almost ceased to watch; while the major, checked and annoyed, but outwardly serene, drew back and bided his time.

Then came Christmas again. Less bright and gay than the last, but peaceful and full of hope. For soon, very soon, a child was coming to them; and the solemn time of the birth of the Wonderful Child touched them to holy tenderness.

Again Mr. Warfield watched and tended his wife, and now, with more than a lover's devotion; and she gave him love for love: her idol no more, it is true, but her husband and her child's father. O how she longed, as she sat at his feet sometimes, and rested her head upon his knees,—how she longed to tell him that secret, that one secret, that had made so great a gulf between them; a gulf still there, bridged only for the time, as she sadly felt;—but she did not dare.

More than once she had resolved to do it, and had actually tried to speak the words, but her lips grew pale and dry, and her voice choked; she *could* not do it—the power was not in her. But when the baby had come, she thought, she

would take it in her arms and go to him and tell him all, and he must forgive her then; her and that other one, who also had a baby; for would he not have a new heart, a father's heart?

And this was her settled resolution; the thought on which she pondered in all her solitary hours. How often would she go over the scene and say all the words that were to be said, and fancy the looks, so different at different times! But they had all, always, a happy ending; when she and the baby were in her husband's arms, forgiven, and there was no secret nor shadow between them any more!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE peaceful Christmas-time had passed; the new year had entered all smiles and joy, and run a fortnight of its course, when the bells of the little church, that had echoed so many of the griefs and joys of Warfield Chase, rang out once more in a joyous, deafening peal.

For thirty-seven years they had not sent such a clanging, thrilling sound out upon the air; but now they rang right merrily, pulled with might and main by lusty arms, prompted by willing hearts; for once again an heir was born to Warfield Chase;—and all men loved his mother.

Who shall paint the father's proud delight, the mother's rapturous worship of this tiny morsel of frail humanity? It filled their souls, leaving no room for doubts, or fears or shadows; making them one again, as in those early, happy days that seemed so long ago.

But surely some shadow was to be ever on Isabel's life, for the baby was hardly a week old, when Sir Harry went off again to London. He did not even bid her good bye, but left a note, fearing, as he *said*, to agitate her; as he *felt*, that she might shake his purpose: and he neither could nor would lead that dreary country life, without her constant presence and sympathetic companionship.

Still, the days were very happy days. Though the grief lay ever hidden at her heart, the surface was bright; and the baby, the precious baby, was always there to comfort her.

Early in February Mr. Warfield was obliged to go to Town, while yet it was thought unfit for Isabel to travel, and this time his sister went with him. She proposed it, and it seemed so right and reasonable that no one objected; but Isabel felt in her heart that it was taking an enemy to be a spy upon her every look and action, when once she, too, could go.

And now Isabel spent long, happy days with her baby, and they two held wondrous converse. During this time, too, she went to see Mrs. Brown. They had grown to be great friends; the tender, motherly woman with her outside

roughness, and the worse than motherless girl; it was rarely that a week passed, when Isabel was at Warfield Chase, without her getting a sight of Mrs. Brown, if it was but for two minutes at her door; it warmed and cheered her, and strengthened her heart.

And now it was many weeks that she had not seen her.

So, one day, early in March, one of those mild, soft days that give such deceptive promise of coming summer, she went; she and her baby.

She went along the country roads and saw the bright blue sky; the trees and hedges changing and growing ready to burst forth into new life, though as yet hardly any buds were to be seen; she heard the little birds twittering and chirping as they sought the wherewithal to build their nests; saw the labourers at their leisurely, easy-seeming work in the fragrant fields, whose fresh, earthy odours were redolent of life and promise; and the hope of the bountiful coming Future spread all around, entered into her also, and she was glad at heart.

And ah! so proud and glad when she walked

once more up the little path bearing her child in her arms; she would let no other take him in there. Yes! the soft eyes were very bright and the cheeks were flushed with gladness, as, decked in radiant smiles, she took him in, the new, precious Gerald, and laid him in Mrs. Brown's arms.

"Eh! Mrs. Warfield! But I'm rare and glad to see you—and looking so bonny, too!" said Mrs. Brown. "Ah! what a baby! Goodness, gracious me! Why, he's never yours; he's too big, by half!"

And Isabel's smiles grew, and she said, "Is he not a beauty?"

"O, he's the very beautifullest baby I ever did see! Bless his dear little heart! But sit ye down, do, my dear; you're none so strong, for all your bright looks."

"O, yes, Mrs. Brown, I am, very strong; and I feel so much better since I came out this morning; I have been wanting so to see you and show you baby."

"Have you, then? It's like you not to forget th'oud woman; and she didn't forget you, neither. No; I were rare and vexed the day I came to see you, and they wouldn't let me;

as if I'd have done you a mischief! I'm none so soft."

"You did come to see me, then?"

"An' they never told you? Well, I knew they were soft 'uns when they wouldn't let me in, but I hadn't thought 'em as soft as that! Come! In course I came; and didn't th' farmer tak' me i'th spring cart and wait for me; an' it's t' first time this many a year as I've been out;—letting alone Sundays."

"O, I'm so glad!" said Isabel, "I thought you would come, and then I was disappointed; but never mind, you see *we* have come to see you, now; and I do think baby must know you, look how he is smiling up at you!"

"I think as how babies generally does know me," replied Mrs. Brown, "leastways, they looks as if they did. An' how's the master? he hasn't come with you this time."

"No, he is in London: he was obliged to go when the Session opened; he is well, thank you."

"Ah! he ought to be! An' proud and happy, too, with his bonny young wife and little master, here; aye, kick, lad, kick! that's what thy little legs are for!"

And, then, Isabel got up, and came and stood over her treasure, and the two looked at him with loving eyes, which found wonderful perfections and resemblances in the round baby face, whose eyes stared at them unwinkingly; the while he diligently sucked his fist.

Suddenly, Mrs. Brown raised her head, and said,

“Yo’ must have a cup o’ tea like that first day, it ’ll do yo’ good. Here, I’ll put young master on t’ sofy, he’ll be as happy as a king; and I’ll look to t’ kettle, and toast a oat cake, and you shall have it all in a jiffy.”

The kettle was singing on the hob, the house-place had just been cleaned, the cat was purring before the fire, the plants were in the window, and Mrs. Brown’s stocking lay with the needles stuck in it, as she had thrown it down when Isabel came in; it was all the same, the very same, as on that day so well remembered; now more than eighteen months ago.

“Why, it seems but yesterday, that day you first came,” said Mrs. Brown, as she bustled about, “and lo, and behold! here you are with a baby! but lor!” and she turned and looked at Isabel, “you are but two babies together;

what business has the likes o' you with a baby, I should like to know?"

"Well, at any rate, I have got him, you sec, Mrs. Brown, and I am not so very young;" said Isabel, with a little air of dignity.

"Eh! bless the bairn!" said Mrs. Brown, "she's as good as a play! None so young, she says!"

"No, Mrs. Brown, I am not, really; why, I am nineteen!"

"O my! what an age! Why, Methusaleh's nothing to it!" then, with a sudden change of tone, she continued. "An' so you're happy, love, wi' that clever husband o' yours that *is* none so young, an' that's a fact? Well, you're the light of his eyes, a blind man could see that, an' I suppose that's what does it. If it was *me*, now, I should be more nor half afraid on him; lor! I daren't go and blow him up like t' farmer, not if it were ever so! But I'm rare and soft to let my tongue go wagging like a lamb's tail! Don't *you* go for to be afraid of him, Mrs. Warfield, I'm sure you've no call to be; and when folks is afraid they gets to hide things like; and there's nothing comes betwixt man and wife like that."

Isabel flushed crimson, and leaned over her baby and played with him, to hide the deep, guilty blush.

This did not escape the sharp, old eyes that rested on her. Mrs. Brown said no more just then; but when she and Mrs. Warfield were at the little table, drinking their tea, while the baby lay in her lap, she spoke again.

"Mrs. Warfield, my dear," she said, "you are but young, though you mayn't think so; now, I'm an old woman, and I've seen a deal, for all I've led such a quiet life. An' I love you as if you was my own, you know I do. So you won't take it amiss if I say to you, 'Never keep nothing from your husband, never: not the least bit of a secret; little or big, good or bad; out with it, whatever it is, and have a clean board to score on.—Nay, don't tell me nothing, but tell him.' "

"I will, Mrs. Brown, I will. Oh, why have I not your strength and courage?" And in presence of the loving sympathy, the tears stood in her eyes, and her voice trembled.

"Why, love, you are but young and tender; but there's One as has strength for the weakest,—ask Him."

After this, a silence settled over them. Presently, Isabel said they must go, and Mrs. Brown carried the baby down the walk, and herself delivered him to the nurse; and saw Isabel wonderfully covered and tucked in, and said good bye to her with smiles; but her face saddened when it was turned to her own door, and she said softly to herself, "Eh, but there's trouble coming, I much mis-doubt; and her so young and tender! poor lamb! and him! he's hard, I'm sure he's hard; I've seen it allays, from the very first." And she sighed heavily, and shook her head more than once as she cleared the little table, and arranged it ready for the farmer.

And Isabel's brow was heavy with thought and fear as she went on her homeward way; till she glanced at her baby's face. Then her heart was strengthened, and her own face lightened, and she resolved that, come what would, when next she saw her husband, that secret should be told.

And, had he come that day, I believe she would have told it. But he did not come that day, nor that week, and when he did come, the first force of her resolve had worn away. Then,

the meeting was so happy she could not bear to disturb its joy; and then—and then—the time slipped away so fast, and there was never a good opportunity. The holidays were over: they returned to Town together: and still it was not told.

Ah! but she shed bitter tears in *secrét*, this happy, proud, young mother; and resolved again and again, and despised herself for her cowardice; but when the time for action came, that terrible wrath she must face, came also, and stood before her as a bodily presence; and she hesitated, and trembled, and feared; and *could* not do it.

So they went back to Town, and the old life began again, the life with a shadow on it; and the shadow soon grew deeper, for Miss Warfield was there.

Now, Miss Warfield's presence caused a wonderful difference in the house—a difference that was felt.

And yet she said nothing, did nothing, actually to interfere between husband and wife; only she was always there, always on the watch, and slight differences and passing clouds that a word or a smile would have dispersed had they

been alone, remained and gathered and grew in that inimical presence till they formed a strong barrier.

Some few times Isabel went to see Mrs. Vernon in fear and trembling, and with an appearance of secrecy that drew attention, and caused nods and winks amongst her servants; and did not Miss Warfield know it? Did not she also see every one of the notes that came and were pushed by Isabel, as she thought, unnoticed, amongst the others, for after perusal?

Sir Harry, too, became at last an open source of contention. More than once he appeared at Mr. Warfield's table in a state to cause shame to his friends; and Mr. Warfield finally objected to his being asked again: to which Isabel would by no means consent, not on any grounds, or for any reasons. As long as he lived, whatever he did, he was her brother, who had loved her always, she said, and he should come to her whenever he would. To which reasoning her husband listened with a frown, and made answer with a sneer.

Alas for love! But so it was. Sneers were no strange things now in Isabel's ears, she was used to them, and had no thought of rebellion;

she felt, indeed, that in some sense she merited them; for she had deceived her husband, was deceiving him still; and the two *were* two, and not one.

In April Lady Upton came to her house in Grosvenor Square, and again all means were tried to induce Sir Harry to live with her; this time in vain: he would not. She rarely saw him, but she heard of him; tales of wild recklessness and mad prodigality that would have wasted the fortune of a prince; and she groaned in spirit, and ate out her heart in vain regrets and fruitless efforts; and, at last, she went to Mr. Upton and besought him to try, if he could not by some means save her boy, declaring herself ready to do anything, if so be she might stop this dreadful life.

And Mr. Upton listened to her, for he did not like it either; it was too fast, too notorious, not in good taste; so, with many complaints and grumblings, he consented to try. They appointed a time of meeting, and Harry, somewhat to his mother's surprise, came at the time, to her house.

He entered the room, carrying his hat, and, having shaken hands, seated himself at a little

distance from them, still holding it, and playing now and then with a light cane.

His uncle addressed him after his manner; calling his attention to the fact, that the crisis must be serious to induce his interference, and pointing out to him the folly of his course of life, and the present and prospective evils inevitably attending it; to all which he assented with a polite conviction and careless assurance that promised ill.

Then he told him that it was open to him to go into the army, or to travel, or do whatever he would; that any income—£5,000 a year—or more, should be paid to him regularly to spend absolutely as he chose, if only he would leave London.

And Sir Harry laughed.

“My esteemed uncle,” he said, “you talk like a book! but, all that I happen now to care for *is* in London, and you can’t bribe me to leave it, because I can get all I want without your help. A year ago I would have taken the tenth of what you offer now; aye, taken it gladly; and led a decent life, at least, if not the noble one I dreamed of. Now, it is too late. As well bribe the cock on his dunghill

with diamonds; they are very precious, very fine; but then they have the slight disadvantage of not being what he wants."

"Really, Harry," said his uncle, "your simile is most appropriate! But if you won't come off the dunghill for your own sake, won't you do it for ours—for Isabel's?"

"For yours? No. When did you ever lift your little finger for me? You might have saved me; I entreated you to help me; and you would not. Neither will I turn aside one jot for your asking. For Isabel's? No. Because, like you, I have grown into a brute, I care more for my own selfish pleasures, the gratification of my own desires, than for any earthly creature. Look at me! See what you have made me, you and my mother! A wretched animal, not fit to be called a man!—and so I act in character!"

And he laughed again, derisively.

Lady Upton had listened, aghast. In her fear and consternation she spoke; and, feeling all threatening to be vain, bowed her haughty spirit to entreaty and promise; large promise of freedom, and indulgence, and money.

In vain. The young face hardened still

more as he listened, and a cynical smile settled on the lips.

“Have you done, mother?” he said quietly, just a second after she had ceased to speak.

“Then I have to say, only what I said to you once before;—you set me on the road; I *am* on it, farther even than I was then, and I mean to go on,—to the end!”

“Then go and be damned, you young idiot!” said his uncle jumping up in a rage, and leaving the room and the house forthwith; with hardly a salutation to Lady Upton.

And then his mother’s wrath burst forth. The restrained, pent-up wrath of months; it rushed out in a torrent, and she poured it upon him without mercy or scruple.

He sat just as before, quite still, flirting his cane; with no sign of emotion, save that his pale face grew still paler, and the lips shut more tightly, but not much.

This quietude excited her to temporary madness. She cursed him as he sat there before her, cursed the day he was born, and her life, and the God that made them; and ended by declaring that she would see his face, and hear his voice, and touch his hand no more, for ever.

Still he sat quiet, even quieter than before, if that were possible, until she had ceased speaking; and sat trembling from head to foot in her chair.

At length he rose, and standing where he was, spoke these few words:—

“Mother, may God forgive you, as I do this day. And now we are quits. I owed you life. You have made it an evil thing to me, and now you have cursed it and me. So, farewell. If we meet again, it shall be your seeking, not mine. Good bye, mother,—for ever!”

And this time he did not offer his hand, but walked steadily to the door, shut it softly, and went out.

That same evening he dined at Mr. Warfield's, where was a Cabinet Minister, and more than one of the magnates of literature and politics; and when the dinner was over, he was drunk.

He had not taken much wine; it was more the effect of excitement, and rage, and wounded feeling, which had made him sick and prevented him from eating, so that the wine flew to his brain at once; but this, of course, Mr. Warfield did not know, and his brow was very stern and

his face dark and cold; for disgrace was bitter to him, and this wild boy was his wife's brother.

Contrary to his usual habit, Sir Harry stayed quietly in a corner of the drawing-room, till all the guests were gone. He wanted comfort and love for his bruised spirit; his heart was not crushed and dead as he would have made believe, it had suffered sorely that day; and he wanted Isabel.

Anxiously and pitifully she had watched him during that long, weary evening; and the last guest had hardly left the room when she rose to go to him; but her husband stopped her.

"Excuse me," he said, "*I must speak to Sir Harry Upton to-night.*"

She looked at him beseechingly; she knew now that he could be hard, very hard.

"O Gerald, don't!" she said, "not to-night."

But he put her back, and went forward as though she had not spoken; and standing opposite Sir Harry, told him coldly and curtly that his house was no place for men in such a state, and that he must beg him not to visit it again until he could behave, while he was there, at least, as a gentleman.

Then, bitter words rose to the boy's lips as

he sprang to his feet, and stood there trembling, stricken; but they were never uttered, for he caught sight of his sister's white face and pitiful eyes, and with a great gulp he swallowed them down; and, crossing quickly over to her, took her in his arms and kissed her again and again; then went to the door, and there turned, and said to Mr. Warfield,

"I shall not fail to observe your wishes, Sir; I will not run the risk of 'polluting your honourable house any more. Good night."

And he went out into the London streets that night, feeling as bitterly alone as any houseless wanderer in them. Surely we may echo Pearson's prayer, "God have mercy on him, for men will have none!"

But, no. His sister had; and, rightly or wrongly, added another burden of secrecy to her life: and she knew now what such a burden meant.

For Sir Harry's life grew daily more reckless, more notorious. Soon he began to be short of money, and men began to speak ill of him; yet a little time and he could not raise money on any terms; and men shunned him. Mr. Warfield forbade his wife to see him at

all, and crushed her faint remonstrance instantly and hopelessly, and it seemed, needlessly; for yet another week or two, and he was no longer seen: he was supposed to have gone to Switzerland, or Egypt, or Africa. And he dropped clean out of mind; and men thought and spoke of him no more. But Isabel and the Jews could have told quite a different story; *they* knew where he was. And Isabel saw him as often as he would. When he wanted her he sent a note, saying when and where she was to meet him; and she went always, with or without ostensible motive, for some good reason or for none: always she went.

And Mr. Warfield grew to look hard and stern, very like the Mr. Warfield of old times; and shut himself much in his library, refusing Isabel's help; and almost ceased going into society. Isabel would fain have done so too, for she was tired, heart and head, but he insisted on her going; and would himself appear suddenly where she was, usually at considerable intervals, sometimes on two following nights; always without any announcement of his intentions.

He came so suddenly that Isabel, in dread for the safety of her two secrets, learned to start

at the sound of his voice, to flush and then grow pale when she saw him. In the ordinary home life, too, she would check herself in the middle of a sentence, and turn abruptly to another subject; having been near to betraying, by some allusion, her knowledge of her brother's movements, or of Mrs. Vernon; for she was not a good hypocrite, poor Isabel, and would, like many another, have been true, if only she had dared.

And Mr. Warfield saw these signs and groaned in spirit, and felt an awful conviction that his misery was coming, coming fast; but said never a word.

Ah! if only he had spoken! only believed ever so little, in the pure girl he had loved and married! But he did not. All the signs he saw bore to him one meaning only—unfaithfulness to himself.

From the middle of May things became rapidly worse. Sir Frederick Popham and Major Delisle, having a month's leave of absence, came to Town; and one of their first visits was to Mrs. Warfield.

Major Delisle was strongly attracted by the, now, almost ethereal beauty, of Isabel, and bent

upon stirring its quiet calm. He made a point of attending every party, concert, flower-show, to which she went, and following her with a quiet homage that never slackened; so quiet, that blinded by indifference, she hardly noticed it or him amongst the crowd of her admirers: but there was one who *did*, and cursed him in his heart.

To Sir Frederick she talked much and often, making opportunities for him in out-of-the-way alleys, and quiet corners of half-deserted rooms. Poor, foolish Isabel! Her thoughts and her talk were of Harry: she hoped great things for him from Sir Frederick's influence, and quite forgot herself, and the construction that might be put upon her actions; and, to do him justice, so did Sir Frederick.

But that helped them no whit in the eyes of the world; they saw—what they saw, and smiled; and checked themselves, and turned away to avoid interrupting the frequent tête-à-têtes: and men at a distance glanced that way, and laughed. And when the favourites, as they deemed them, were out of the way, they haunted her path, and contended for her smiles, with a

new and strange boldness ; for, if one had succeeded, why not others ?

And so it came to pass that her name was no longer the whitest of the white : unsullied and unapproachable.

Her mother heard some of the talk one day, and came to her—it was the first time for weeks—and told it to her in wrath and scorn ; but Isabel, in the false security of innocence, laughed at the notion of such a thing, and would not be warned.

One day, towards the latter part of June, when breakfast was over, Mr. Warfield said :

“ I suppose you are going to Lady Germaine’s, to night, Isabel ? ”

“ I don’t know, Gerald,—if you wish it ; but I am very tired.”

“ Are not your *friends*,” with the slightest accent on the word, “ the Major and Sir Frederick, to be there, then ? ”

“ O no,” said Isabel, innocently ; “ their leave was up, and they went back to Bransford yesterday.”

“ And you are tired, to-day ? ”

“ Yes, I think I am always tired, now ; ” and she sighed. “ Besides, I—”

“Well, what?”

For there was a sudden pause. She was going to say, that she must be up early the next morning; but fearing inferences, stopped short, and blushed. Then came the prevarication, as it had come, alas! many a time before.

“I—I—don’t like leaving baby so much.”

“Poor baby!” said Mr. Warfield; “God help him.”

“Why, Gerald? Is anything the matter?—and I don’t know!” And she started up.

“No, Isabel, you may sit down, nothing is the matter—that you don’t know.”

“But, Gerald—what do you mean?”

Mr. Warfield glanced towards his sister, and saw the cold, cynical smile on her lips, followed her eyes, and, for the first time, caught sight of a little sealed note among the heap of opened letters;—Isabel, in her hurry, had pushed them aside.

“You have missed opening one of your letters, I think?” he said.

“O, no!” she answered hastily, blushing at the same time.

“O, yes! I think,” he retorted; “look

there!" and he put out his hand as if to take it up. She seized it.

"O, that!" she said.—"That is only my dressmaker's bill!"

"Rather early with her bill, is she not? Besides, you have not opened it."

She gave a frightened glance to the two stern faces looking so pitilessly on her, and with trembling fingers broke the seal and opened the letter.

"O, yes!" she said, "it's all right. And that reminds me, Gerald, I want some money; will you give me a cheque for £100?"

And this she said, partly from the absolute necessity she felt to say something, partly to make it seem truly that it was the bill, and partly because she wanted money sorely, and pounced upon the chance.

"Certainly, I will write it out at once." Then, after a pause, broken only by Isabel's observing that the morning was so very warm she thought they would really have been better without the little fire, he said,—

"I never saw such a thing as a dressmaker's bill, now; I wonder what it is like!—will you let me look, Isabel?"

As he spoke every trace of colour left her face, and she clutched the note tightly; when he stopped, she answered, with a forced laugh,

“O, Gerald! fancy you looking at a dress-maker’s bill! Why, you would know as much about it as baby!”

“Never mind, I happen to be curious; let me look.”

She rose from the table, and, sweeping up her letters, took them all in her hands, saying,

“O, no! I shouldn’t like,—I couldn’t,—and see how late it is! I must go now, for I have half-a-hundred things to do to-day; and I should like to have time to rest this afternoon if I *am* to go to the ball. So good bye till dinner.” And she went round to him, and stooped for the accustomed kiss.

His lips just touched her cheek, while his eyes rested on the crumpled papers in her hands; and he clenched his own that they might not seize those slender wrists and take them by force;—and that he could not do, he was a gentleman.

So he let her go,—poor, silly, trembling Isabel, so foolish in her deceit!—bearing with her that which, if he had seen it, would have

been heaven's joy to him : for what cared he for his sister or her disgrace—then ?

He let her go, and bowed his head upon his hands, and groaned.

But soon he raised it. He would ask Priscilla what she had seen, what she suspected, *whom* she suspected. Yes, it had come to that, he would ask Priscilla about his wife. And he lifted his head meaning to address her, but her place was vacant, she had quitted it swiftly and silently immediately after Isabel ; and Mr. Warfield was alone.

He wrote the cheque and sent it up to Isabel, then sat down to work and tried to chain his thoughts in the petty details of a great scheme ; tried at first vainly, but soon he mastered them, and sat writing steadily hour after hour.

Meanwhile Isabel drove to the Bank and got her cheque cashed, and went to sundry shops, but left no money there ; and finally drove to Pimlico and got out at the end of that same street which she had trodden so many times, and trod now for the last—on that she had resolved. She could bear no more such scenes as that of the morning ; she would try to

arrange some way in which help might be sent, if help should again be needed ; but, in any case, she would have no more notes, go no more herself.

She found them joyous. Mr. Vernon, almost restored to health, working diligently at a picture whose price was already paid, with a promise of more commissions when that should be executed. The baby, plump and round, with a face all smiles and dimples ; and Mrs. Vernon, more than content.

Isabel stammered out painfully her unwelcome news, helped by Mrs. Vernon's ready understanding and sympathy ; and it was settled that, unless by some means it might come to pass that her brother's heart should be softened to her, there must be no further communication between the two,—“only,” said Mrs. Vernon, “now we are doing so well, we are thinking of changing houses soon,—I must let you know our address, in case any thing should happen.”

Isabel blushed and shook her head sadly, “I should, indeed, like to know where to find you,” she answered, “but I dare not risk even one more note—I really dare not.”

"Mrs. Warfield, you are right," interposed Mr. Vernon. "I bitterly regret that we should have been the cause of any concealment between you and your husband, and great though the loss is to us, I am desirous that all such should cease. Still I should wish that you could find us at will. Stay, we will put the new address in the 'Times,' with only the one letter V., before and after it. There *can* be no harm in that."

"No, indeed. And I shall be so glad even to know where you are. And if I can come—"

And her voice trembled so, she was obliged to stop.

"Don't agitate yourself, dear Mrs. Warfield, dear Isabel," said Mrs. Vernon, "we know, indeed we know, and shall be very sure that it is no fault of yours that keeps you away. And I fear, fear greatly, that we shall see you no more; or not for very long. So God bless you, and good bye!"

And the sisters-in-law kissed each other as for a life-long parting; and Isabel kissed the baby, and shook hands with Mr. Vernon, who looked after her wistfully till she was lost to sight, then turned to his work with a sigh.

"God help her!" he said. "She is all too fearful and too tender for this world's work! I could wish she had never come here! If it were to bring her harm!"

"Oh, there is no fear!" said his wife. "But I am glad we have given it up, though I shall miss her sorely; and you, too, baby,—won't you?" And baby was snatched up and kissed largely, as a safety valve for the expression of his mother's feelings.

And Isabel drove home with a somewhat lightened heart, rid of one burden; and hoping soon to lay down the other. After luncheon she played with her boy, and then lay down and slept with him in her arms—a sweet, delicious sleep—filled with happy dreams—that lasted until it was time to dress for dinner; would have lasted longer still had she not been awaked.

The three dined alone that day, and almost silently. But there was no constraint in Isabel's manner, and on her face was a look of rest and peace which struck both her watchers, and gave to Mr. Warfield a gleam of hope.

"So seeming fair!" he thought. "Surely it is truth, truth itself, and no made-up mask,

that sits so closely on her face! Oh, if it were but so!—But it cannot be—it cannot.”

And the heavy cloud settled over him again.

He did not accompany his wife to the ball he had spoken of at Lady Germaine's; but it was still early when he might have been seen there—*was* seen there—alone; ensconced, now in one quiet corner, now in another, watching his wife. An agonizing watch, that had its ludicrous side, like most miseries, and drew forth many sagacious nods and knowing smiles and shrugs.

The serene expression still dwelt on the fair, young face, only it was brighter, more joyous than it had been in his sight for many weeks; and now and again her light laugh sounded in his ears—the laugh he used so to love. When did he hear it last? He tried to remember, and could not, watching her all the time; trying to detect which of the many men who fluttered about her and hung upon her steps, she distinguished, which was *the* man; if, indeed, it were not one of those two who had gone back to Bransford.

And she danced with one; and as he saw her smile into his face, he clenched his teeth,

and thought, "*that* is the man!" And she talked to another; and again he thought, "*that* is the man!" And she sat some minutes with bent head listening to another; and yet again he thought, "*that* is the man!"

And so through the weary hours which left him worn and harrassed, half mad with jealous pain, and yet with no definite object for his wrath.

Towards the end of the evening Isabel saw him, and went to him at once.

"O, Gerald!" she said, "I am so glad you have come! Have you been here long?"

He looked at her, and smiled—a strange, tired, hopeless smile. "Ages, I think," he said.

"Ah! you don't like these things, and I am sure I don't care for them! Why don't you let me give them up, when they tire you so? At least let us go home now."

"Willingly," he answered.

In the carriage he sat with his head leaned back against the cushions, and shut eyes; he might have been asleep, but for a slight nervous contraction of the lips, which showed occasionally; otherwise he was absolutely still.

After a few minutes he spoke, in a slow, dreamy tone.

"Well, I think we *will* give these things up, as you say. We might go and live somewhere quite out of the world, all by ourselves—you and I—as you thought once you would joy to live; what should hinder us? You, and I, and baby. Shall we, Isabel?"

"Indeed, Gerald, if you would, I should be so happy!"

"Truly, Isabel?"

"Very truly,—but—"

"Ah, yes! I thought there would be a but!" And he sat upright, and his eyes blazed down upon her, and he laughed. "Come, let us hear the but!"

"Gerald, how strange you are, you frighten me! It was only that I thought it would not be right that your talents and powers should be buried in such a life as that."

"Ah! a pretty reason, a very pretty one! Child, say no more! Tempt me with no more sweet lies; how sweet, God knows!"

"Gerald, what do you mean? It is no lie, it is the truth."

"The truth! And you have never lied to

me, sweet Isabel, with the fair, candid face, never?"

"O Gerald! I—O Gerald!—don't!"

"Ah! that's enough! That is what I meant, *only* that! But see, here we are at home. Sweet home! Only I have loads of work to do. So you go to bed, and sleep. For men must work, and women must—sleep! Do they lie in their sleep, I wonder?"

"Nay, Gerald, if you speak so to me, it is the other that will be true, 'Men must work, and women must weep.' Can I sleep if you send me away with such words as those?"

The carriage stopped, and he helped her to get out, and went in with her, and would have said good night there in the hall; but she kept her hand on his arm, and would go with him into the library.

Once inside, and the door shut, she stood and looked up at him beseechingly.

"Forgive me, Gerald, and don't make me so afraid, and I will never lie to you again, never!"

"Tush, child! A woman's word! It's nothing, a mere nothing! A wise man would never expect it, but I,—I have been a fool, you

see! But now I am going to be wise, so good night; go to bed, and let me get to my work."

"And that is all you will say to me?"

His tone changed.

"Go, will you?" he said savagely, "or surely I shall do you a mischief."

"Gerald!" she cried, but did not move, only stood with parted lips, looking at him in terror.

He laughed again.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," he said. "I am acting like a madman, but you see I am tired and irritable, and have a great deal to do; and it vexes me to have my time wasted. There," and he stooped and kissed her forehead, "now go to bed like a good girl, and you'll find me all right in the morning."

"May I not help you?" she said timidly.

"Why, if you *would*!—but no, you can't, not now. No one in the wide world can help me now! So," with another change back to the forced 'lightness of tone, "as I must bear the burden alone, even let me take it up."

"I don't understand you, Gerald,—but if I must go, I will. Good night."

And she went, but paused at the door, and looked longingly towards him; he still stood as she had left him, looking after her, but when he met her glance, he shook his head impatiently, and went to his writing table.

So, she left him alone.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next morning there was no fire in the breakfast-room.

"You see, I have remembered your wish, Isabel," said Mr. Warfield, when they had been a little time at table, "and really, I think you are right; it seems too absurd to have a fire on the longest day."

"Yes, Gerald, thank you, but I didn't mean,—that is,—I would rather have had it."

"Ah! you feel as if the light on the home altar was put out? Now, that is curious, so do I."

"Then let us have it again to-morrow!"

"To-morrow? There is a long day before to-morrow, the longest day in all the year. And you look pale, my wife, and hollow-eyed—not fit for a long day. Let me advise you to stay in your own rooms to-day."

"O Gerald! don't call me your wife, like that! And I am not so very tired, the air will do me good."

"Does the title offend you, then? Are you not in very truth, my wife?"

"O Gerald! you know. You never spoke to me so, never, till last night. Tell me what I have done—Oh!" as he glanced towards his sister, "I don't care; I can bear it no longer!"

"Mrs. Warfield, allow me to suggest that you are talking very like a baby; we will, if you please, go on with breakfast; and arrange any little affairs we may have, when we are alone."

"If you will excuse me, I will retire," said Miss Warfield, flushing deeply; "I have finished breakfast."

"By no means, Priscilla," said her brother; "I have not; neither, I think, has *my wife*."

"Pray, don't go, Miss Warfield," said Isabel, smiling painfully; "I am foolish, I know, and too ready to make a fuss about trifles."

"Such as my displeasure?" said her husband.

She only looked at him, and tried to eat—but tried in vain.

"Shall you go out, then?" he said, as they rose from the table.

"Yes, I have several things to do, and I really think the air will do me good: but I shall soon be back if you want anything."

"If you could stay and help me, now?" And the hard eyes—the eyes that used to be so soft—fixed her and held her fast.

"I—I am sorry, but—I said—that is—O Gerald! it will do just as well when I come home; and I do want to go out! Let me go this once, and I will do anything afterwards."

"When I don't want anything—of course! But don't be alarmed. I shouldn't think of interfering with such a marvellous desire for air and exercise. Go, by all means. By the bye, did you say where you were going?"

"Oh! to several places. Bond Street, and Regent Street; and for a short drive somewhere or other."

"Very descriptive, but slightly indefinite! Perhaps, when you return, you will be able to favour me by saying where you have been?"

"Of course, Gerald, if you wish to know."

But she coloured, and looked confused, and

went up to him, hurriedly, for the farewell kiss. She wanted to be gone, and showed it.

And, as on the previous morning, his lips just touched her cheek, while he looked eagerly at the papers in her hands; but there was no mysterious note among them this time.

Isabel had already ordered her carriage; she dressed rapidly and went down to it. Miss Warfield followed her out at the distance of a few steps, and made as if she would go up the road, but paused just an instant,—time enough to hear the direction, “Kensington Gardens, Bayswater side.” As the carriage rolled away, she did walk some yards along the road; then turned suddenly, as if she had forgotten something, and went back into the house. Two minutes later, she had taken off her bonnet, and was tapping at the library door. On her brother’s impatient, “Come in!” she entered, outwardly calm, save for the excitement of repressed triumph flashing in her eyes.

Mr. Warfield was standing, gazing into the empty grate; he looked listless and languid, quite unlike himself.

He turned as she came in.



"*You* here, Priscilla!" he said. "What do you want? I am busy."

"So it appears!" she replied, bitterly; "always too busy to have time for me! Still, I must ask your attention for a few minutes; for your sake—not for mine."

"Well, if you must, you must, I suppose. Sit down. But be brief, if possible; for I really have a great deal of work to do."

"Which must wait—as it *was* waiting when I came in."

"Pshaw!" he said. "Don't be absurd! As if a man couldn't stand thinking but he must be twitted with it! If you have anything to say, say it; if not, leave me to work."

"Gerald, do you remember that night in the library at Warfield Chase—the night of the garden party?"

"Yes, I remember. You took care to impress it on me. What of that?"

"You remember that I warned you; in your own words I warned you; but your mad passion would have its way, and—you married your wife."

"Very true. But you hardly need have

went up to him, hurriedly, for the farewell kiss. She wanted to be gone, and showed it.

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the baby face, and false, sweet tongue? Cannot any child see it? What I said, I meant—*proofs*. Now, will you hear them?"

He sat upright, and said, calmly, "Yes, I will hear them—as her husband, her protector; I will hear them—to disprove them."

She smiled. "So be it," she said. "If you can satisfy yourself that your honour is still intact, and pick it out of the mud, *I* need not mind; I, who am only your sister. But precious time is passing; time, that will give you the crowning proof."

"Woman!" he cried "*will* you speak! Can you not see that I am on the rack?"

"I will. You saw that note? It was not the first, nor the tenth, nor the twentieth, that has been so concealed and carried away,—I ask you, why? Time after time she has driven to places you know nothing of; has got out at the bottom of a quiet street, and left her carriage for half an hour, for an hour;—I ask you, why? She has had money, much money lately; she has not paid a single bill—that dressmaker she spoke of yesterday morning has not sent one—I have been to enquire,—so the £100 was not for her;—I ask you, for whom it was?"

Who has had the other sums you have given her so lavishly for the asking, as if money were dirt for *her*,—who?

“And now, this morning, she has driven out early and alone, though any one might see that she was ill and worn out;—again, I ask you, why? I do not know, that I admit, but I can guess,—so can you. You asked her whither she was going, and she answered you. Now, shall *I* tell you the first order she gave to her coachman?—tell you whither she has gone—is going now as fast as her horses can take her,—*her* horses, forsooth! Shall I? And will you follow her, and see for yourself? Will you face the proof you ask?”

“Priscilla! For God’s sake! It is too horrible!”

“Ah! you won’t! You shrink. You *will* keep your darling; fair still to you, if foul to all the world! Keep her, then. But as I don’t think her a fit companion for a respectable woman, I must even try to find an asylum elsewhere. To think that I should live to see *you*, a coward! with not enough of manliness to dare to face the truth, miserable

though it be, that you have prepared for yourself!"

"Hush!" he said, "Your taunts are like the babble of a child to suffering such as mine; you cannot understand it. Pray God, you never may! Now, finish your evil work. Whether your tidings be true or false, it is an evil work, and in an evil spirit you have done it, O my enemy! Finish it. Tell me where she is, and I will follow her."

His tone subdued her, and she answered quietly,—

"Kensington Gardens, Bayswater side."

"Ah!" he said, "Thank you. I shall not forget. Now, mind me; you breathe no word of this without my leave to any living soul. Stop here, and wait for the news I shall bring."

"But won't you have your brougham, Gerald? You will never get there in time if you walk!"

"You fear lest she should escape? No, I shall not take my brougham to tell my servants that I play the spy upon my wife; a Hansom from the corner will do as well. O, I shall

not be too late, no fear. Was a man *ever* too late, do you think, when he was going to his doom? Oh, my God, my God! If only death might meet me on the way!"

Did it ever strike you what wonderful passions and fears, what murders and miseries, are walking the streets of that great London in outward quietness, in the ordinary dress of the day, bearing no visible marks of villany or suffering? They walk the pavements, and cross the streets, and call Hansoms and cabs, and get into and out of the same under our eyes, daily and hourly;—and which amongst us ever knows?"

Who, that saw the quiet gentleman call a Hansom in a street off Piccadilly on the 21st of June, gave him a second look, or dreamed of the chaos of jealousy, misery, and despair, hidden within him.

He was very calm, calmer even than usual, and spoke in a slow, still voice that sounded to him like the voice of another person.

"Kensington Gardens, Bayswater side,—and fast."

He said the words aloud to the cabman; and

as he went along, they went with him,—“Kensington Gardens, Bayswater side,—and fast!”

He was like a man in a nightmare to whom a great mountain is coming nearer, and nearer, and nearer; who is stunned, paralysed, and can neither shriek nor fly; whose agony grows till the drops stand on his face, and he would pray that it might come faster and crush him at once: only he can neither pray nor think, for his Being is all one horrible Dread!

So the stricken man went under the bright summer sunshine. He did not think; did not consider what evidence the Past held, what he was going to meet now, what he must do in the Future. He only lived, lived in every quivering nerve, and went on. And the words “Kensington Gardens, Bayswater side,” went with him. They formed themselves on his lips, and he uttered them. Then he heard the sound, and shut them tight. But hardly a minute had passed when he heard them yet again,—“Kensington Gardens, Bayswater side—and fast!” For they held his Fate.

He was as one in a dream. Yet every sense, every nerve, seemed doubly alive. He saw and

knew his own carriage standing at the first gate, while yet the cabman could hardly tell whether it were a carriage or no; and lifted the trap and ordered him to go to the further gate; and sat far back so that his servants might not see him, for was there not yet a chance?

When he got out, he told the man to wait, and turned down the broad walk towards the other gate, as any man might have done. One part of him did this, while the other felt that awful horror ever growing, growing and advancing.

He saw no one. All down the walk there was not a creature. Yes, there was. One woman in the distance, and when he saw her he gave a great gasping sigh, and flew, rather than walked, towards her. For oh! if it might be she—she, alone!”

But it was not she. And he felt dizzy and faint, and, turning suddenly out of the walk, went a few yards and leaned against the trunk of a tree, almost hidden from sight by its full, leafy branches. He leaned there, and the drops stood on his brow, and he prayed that his misery might hasten; for this was more than he could bear.

一、關於我國經濟建設之方針
（一）發展生產，繁榮經濟
（二）公私兼顧，勞資兩利
（三）統籌兼顧，適當安排
（四）自力更生，艰苦奋斗
（五）發展農業，增加糧食
（六）發展工業，增加產量
（七）發展交通，便利運輸
（八）發展教育，提高文化
（九）發展衛生，保障健康
（十）發展體育，增強體質
（十一）發展藝術，豐富生活
（十二）發展科學，促進進步
（十三）發展宗教，尊重信仰
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stood a few seconds looking after the flying figure, then dropped her veil, and walked off rapidly in the direction where her carriage was standing.

And Mr. Warfield never offered to stop her. He was awake now; full of passionate hate and rage; quiet no longer, dreaming no longer, capable of thought, master of himself.

“I will not speak to her here, I will go home. O God!—home! Yes, I will go there and meet her, I shall have time! For the fair, foul liar will go and do her little commissions, to make her story good;—will go and buy laces, and ribbons, and gloves, and talk innocently of shades and sizes, reeking from treachery such as this! O God! *Is* this creature a woman? Is she not a devil?

“I, that have so loved her! That would have coined my life to fulfil her every desire!—and she must play me false, and stoop to carrion such as this!

“O that I had him! But I *will* have him, and I will kill him, and trample on him, and crush his flesh and his bones!”

And he walked quickly out of the Gardens

and leaped into the Hansom, saying, "Back,—and faster!"

And the man drove very fast. Not many minutes had passed when he was again at the stand, and the poor horse stood trembling and quivering;—what had *he* done, I wonder, that he should suffer?—while Mr. Warfield leaped out and gave the man a sovereign; then walked rapidly to his own house, and went into the library.

The clock faced him as he opened the door. On seeing it, he started. "An hour!" he said, "only one hour! It was eleven when I went out, it is twelve now; the clock must have stopped."

And he went up to examine it, and listened, and heard that it ticked loudly.

His sister rose from an arm chair and came towards him, saying,

"It is only an hour, Gerald; I have sat here and watched the minutes go."

"Oh! *you* are there still!" he said.

"Yes, you told me to wait, you know—and—"

"Ah! yes! You want to know. Well, be

content. You have your desire. I have seen; I am convinced. Now, go and leave me!"

"But, Gerald, what did you see? what will you do? Will you—"

"Leave me, I say! I will do what I will do. It is no affair of yours, go!"

She looked at him wistfully. It was not so happy a thing as she had expected, this vengeance; it was not a pleasant thing to see her brother stand there with that terrible look upon his face; that evil look.

"Gerald," she said timidly, "I am sorry."

"What! *you* a liar too! Never say that to me again, Priscilla; never say any word to me again about,—my wife. Your work is done. Now go, go at once! And never come here any more; never, on any pretence, so long as we both shall live."

She cowered before him. Was this her triumph? She looked at him beseechingly; but he pointed imperiously to the door, and so, she went.

Her repentance had begun, but she found no place for it, then nor ever; not when it had grown very bitter, and she sought it carefully, with tears.

Left alone, Mr. Warfield looked again at the clock, it had moved two minutes;—and then he sat down to wait.

He sat still, while the clock ticked on and on; waiting, only waiting; Oh! how long this waiting was!

He looked again. Only five minutes! And then, in his bitter pain, he spoke aloud.

“O God! if this is to last, I shall go mad! I must think. I *will* think.” And he thought —“What shall I think of! Not her! O no, not her! Not the life we have lived together, not the sweet dream of heaven she brought to me, O fool! not the delicious poison I sucked so madly! No. For there, again, is madness.

“I will think of the days before I knew her; the days when I was a child, and of my father; yes, I will think of my father! He knew; he had tried. O father, father! And you warned me again, yes, again, that day; that day when I was coming from the park, filled with sweet madness, drunk with dreamy musing and delight; you stood before me, and you spoke. Can you see me now, father? I can hear your voice, and the words you said, the very words, ‘Never, as you value either, give your honour

or your happiness into the keeping of a woman.' But *I*, O idiot! *I*, the first in all the world to do it! *I* had found a new thing under the sun, an angel woman; white as light, pure as heaven, true as God is true! And Mabel met me, too, and stood in the flesh before me, but what was that to me? What had *my* soul's darling to do with such as she? Ah! what, indeed! Would to God she had! Aye, would to God! This bitter, black hypocrisy; this fair, foul, living sin that is coming, coming now, coming home, coming to me; what is Mabel to such as she? I was hard on Mabel, I think; yes, I *was* hard.

"Oh! will she never come!"

And he got up and paced the room, and looked again at the clock. Five minutes more, only five minutes.

"Was I hard? Was it not right? Would it not be good to crush and kill them all, *all*; and let this miserable world end so? This frightful, evil world where men are tricked and fooled, and played with, like the veriest straws whirled in the idle air! Men! Are we men to be such tools? To toil and suffer, and

agonize and die, aye, die gladly! if so be we may save a pang to our fair idols; win a smile to shine on our dying bed! Men!—Fools, idiots, slaves! Worse than the drunken Helots that made sport for the Spartan children; for we ourselves, of our own will, take the fatal draught, and we *will* drink it, let God or the devil guard the cup! We drink and are drunken, more than with wine: and then we find the dregs: and shrink, and cower away. The dregs! Aye, that is my wife; my wife who is coming home to me; why does she not make haste, my wife? Can she not feel how I long for her coming? how slow the minutes are till she appears; my beauty, my queen, my life's idol!"

And he stopped in his passionate pacing, and laughed, laughed loud and long.

And the sound of the laugh frightened him.

"Surely, I am going mad," he said, aloud; and he went and sat down in his chair, and grasped its arms.

"Where is it? Somewhere, 'To be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain.'"

And now he went on, sometimes speaking aloud, sometimes thinking only; unconscious which he did.

“Only five minutes!

“Ah! I will think of books! What books shall I think of?—‘To be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain!’ Who wrote that? I *always* knew that! I *will* remember. Who was it? Shakespeare? No. But Shakespeare wrote Othello. Poor Othello! I am sorry for Othello!

“Yes, I *can* think of Othello! ‘To be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain.’ I didn’t remember who wrote that, after all! I must remember that, and *then* I can think of Othello!”

“Oh! that weary, horrible clock! I *will* think! It was Coleridge. Yes, it *was* Coleridge. *Now*, perhaps, it will leave me.

‘And life is thorny ; and youth is vain :
And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.’

“*Am* I going mad? I must not go mad; not yet. I will think of Othello. How did he feel, I wonder, when he felt his wife, his darling, struggle and writhe under the pillows? Was

he sorry for her? Did he want to let her go? No! A thousand times, No! He rejoiced, and laughed in his heart, and pressed them down, stronger and firmer. And I? What shall *I* do to my wife? Yes, I *ought* to think of that; what shall I do? Not smother her with pillows, I could not wait for that; no. What, then, shall I do?

“I will take her slim white throat between my hands, and press the life out while I look at her.

“And she will be dead; dead, like Desdemona.

“And *she* was innocent!

“‘To be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain.’

“Pshaw, *I* have no Iago at my ear! *I* have not convicted her on the pitiful evidence of a villain and a handkerchief! My eyes saw her, her very self, saw her—O God! and the heavens do not fall!

“Will she never come?

“And she will be dead, as Desdemona was dead. Yes, I saw her. And he? Who is he? I must find him, and curse him, and kill him. Ah! I can curse him, now. I *do* curse him, the pitiful

villain, that has stolen my treasure, my darling, and made it—rubbish for the dunghill! Yes, I curse him. Can I remember one of those swinging old Romish curses, I wonder? I should like to remember.

“‘To be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain.’

“Nothing too small for them, nothing too great. Let me try. I curse him! Let him be accursed! In eating, and drinking and sleeping; in sitting, in standing, in lying; in walking, in talking; in body and soul; by day and by night; in life and in death; in endless eternities! Amen. So be it.

“‘To be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain.’

“But I don’t love her! How can I? Oh! but I do, I do! The fair, beautiful creature! O my Isabel, my Isabel, how could you? I, that never held another woman in my arms, whose lips never touched another’s! And *you*! O God! The shame, the agony! Who could have dreamed so fair a form could hold so foul a soul!

“‘To be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain.’

“Will that *never* cease; and will the clock *never* reach another hour?

“I will think of Othello again, and Desdemona. How white and fair she must have looked when she lay there, still, at rest for ever! Was there any pain in her face, I wonder? Her eyes would be covered,—he could not see her eyes, could not see the suffering, the anguish in them; and it is *there* one does see it. *Why* could he not see it? It was not there: she suffered no longer. She had escaped, and he could hurt her no more.

“And *this* is what I would have done to you, oh, my false wife! in my mad passion! I thank God that you have waited! I thank God for the slow, dragging minutes: for I will not do it, now! I will not see you lying—still, and white, and dead,—and know that I can hurt you no more! I will not look on the beautiful mask, the senseless lump of clay, and know that you are gone out of my reach for ever! You, yourself, your soul! Have you a soul, I wonder; or are the Easterns right, who say that women have no souls? Well, soul or no soul, I will keep *you*—the creature that pleads, and loves, and suffers, and agonizes;—I will keep *you*, alive!

“And you shall suffer! In the precious, dainty flesh; in the quivering spirit. You, that have trampled my honour in the dust, and made my name a byword, and my heart a hell; *your* name shall be a shame and a scorn, and men shall point the finger at you. In shame, and loneliness, and misery, shall you live, until such time as your pain shall kill you; in shame, and loneliness, and misery, shall you die! And I—I will watch you live,—I will watch you die! As you have done to me, so shall it be done to you: so help me God!”

As the terrible words left his lips, his eyes fell on a bouquet of flowers, such as she always placed on his table.

“As she has done to me!” he repeated. “Yes, she *has* watched, and waited, and put flowers in my life and in my rooms; even this morning, in her hurry, she did not forget! Why? Oh, the hypocrite! the black, damned hypocrite! Would to God she might come; I can wait no more!”

And again he paced the room, listening; every nerve and sense strained and poured into that one sense, listening.

And wheels, many wheels, rolled along, and

mingled voices came to him, and the sound of many feet.

Suddenly, he stood still. "At last!" he said, "at last! I would know her carriage amongst a thousand!

"How shall I receive her dainty ladyship? Sitting or standing? Or, shall I go and conduct her for the last time? No, I will not: the Judge always sits."

And he went and sat down.

The wheels stopped at the door. He heard the steps put down, the door opened; heard her feet in the hall; heard her sweet, low voice, speaking to a servant. "Oh, if she were not to come in here!" he thought; but, another instant, and again he heard the light feet coming swiftly to him, as they had come so often: they came to his door; it opened, and she entered.

Entered, and stood before him, wearing a fair, fresh face, decked in smiles; satisfied, happy.

He just saw her; then covered his face with his hands, and groaned.

She went towards him, quickly, with a look of fear. "Gerald, what is it; what has happened?"

Before she could reach him, he had raised

his head, and showed her a face,—white, stern, and pitiless; and with an imperative gesture, had rooted her where she stood.

“Stop!” he said, “no nearer!”

She stood as if stunned; with parted lips and eyes wide with fear.

And he looked at her; and felt, in all his misery, some of the devilish joy he had imagined.

He sat and looked, and spoke no word more.

Presently, when she could move, she advanced a step, and gasped out, “Gerald!”

“Stand there, I say,” he said loudly; then in a quiet, cruel voice, “or I shall kill you;—and I don’t want to kill you!”

“O, God!” she cried, clasping her hands, “he is mad!”

“Would to God I were mad, madam,” he replied. “But I am not; listen, and see if I am mad. I will tell you what I did this morning.”

She stood like a statue.

“I went in a Hansom to Kensington Gardens, and saw a parting und era tree;—*now*, do you think I am mad?”

She could not become paler, so the colour came a little into her face at the words.

"O, Gerald, forgive me!" she said, "only this once; it is the last time." And again she would have advanced to him.

"Keep back, I say! Forgive you! *I* forgive you! and believe you again, I suppose, and look into your eyes, and hang on you lips, and follow you with worship like a holy thing! *You!* Do this, and forgive you!—It is you who are mad!"

"O, Gerald, Gerald, don't! Only hear me—"

"No, I will *not* hear you; I will not damn your soul with more lies; there are enough to sink it to the nethermost hell, without help of mine."

"Gerald, you cannot mean—you cannot think—" then, with a bewildered look, "O God, am *I* mad? Or is it a dream, an awful dream?"

"No, the dream has passed, madam; *this* is the awaking. I *have* dreamed; ah! such dreams of trust, and hope and bliss; but they are fled, fled for evermore—and—I am awake."

"You are *not* awake, Gerald, or—you are

mad! No, no, you are not mad! But it is an evil dream, a wicked dream, that has come to you; listen to me, only listen, and think of baby, our baby, and it will vanish.—O, Gerald, Gerald!”

“What!” he shouted, as he sprang from his seat, “You keep up the farce to the last, the very last! False to the core! Falsest among women! Falser, if falser might be!”

“O, Gerald!” she broke in with a wild, beseeching cry, “Don’t! you will kill me! Only hear me!—I—”

“Never, so help me God! Never again will I hear your voice, or touch your hand, or see your face in this world,—and, I pray, not in the next! I curse you, woman; you, and your fatal beauty; your soft, sweet eyes, and your lying tongue! I curse you! And now, go. Go, with my curse upon you, from the home you have made desolate; the home that can never be home any more. Go.”

But she did not move. It was all so sudden, so strange. *Was* he mad? she wondered. And she stood there; still, stupefied; gazing at him with strange, wild, wondering eyes.

He looked at her, and still she did not move.

Then he laughed,—yes, laughed! and said in a cold, slow voice of bitterness,—

“You do not want to go? You do not like to play out the play? You have taken the sweet, and such lips as yours, you think, were surely never meant to taste the bitter? But they shall! By God, they shall! Aye, very bitterness! I will explain to you. You are to go out of this room and out of this house; out from your place and your name; out from friends, and kindred, and neighbours; out into darkness, and misery, and shame! Now, do you understand? Go. Go out.”

Still she stood there, with that wild, strange look.

“What? you *will* not go? Not yet? Madam, your sight is loathsome to me.”

She uttered a long, low moan; and turned and went, slowly and totteringly, towards the door.

He rose and followed her. Why? He did not know. Was it that he longed to keep her in sight, that his eyes could not bear to lose her? Was it that he himself would put her out of his house and shut the door upon her? He did not know.

There was no one in the hall, and she went forward with the same slow, heavy step; but instead of turning to go out, she went towards the foot of the staircase.

In an instant he sprang forward and stood before her, between her and the stairs; and pointing imperiously to the outer door, said again the one word, "Go!"

She looked at him pitifully. "Yes," she said, "but my baby—I am going for my baby!"

"No, you are going out there. The baby is mine—in law at least; and I keep him."

She seemed not to understand, though she stood quiet while he spoke; when he ceased, she said in a low plaintive voice, "My baby, I want my baby."

"You shall not have him. Go!—Alone!"

She raised her head, and the colour rushed into her face.

"I will *not*," she said; "I *will* have him! You are cruel and wicked; but I will have my baby; he is mine, my very own, and I *will* have him!"

And she rushed up to him, and laid her

hands on him, and tried to push him on one side. Ah! with such poor, weak hands!

And he,—he shrank as from a leper, though yielding no inch of room. “Pah!” he said, in a tone of contemptuous loathing, “to be touched by you, again!”

When she felt him shrink, she turned, with a wild, low cry, and, rushing to the heavy outer door, tried to unfasten it with nerveless, trembling fingers, that would not do their work.

Again he followed her.

“Allow me, Madam!” he said, in a tone of cold politeness.

It was her turn to shrink. She literally cowered from him in the corner by the wall, while he unfastened the door, and opened it wide. Then, without a look, she darted out, and fled—fled wildly from this awful misery and horror; fled, she knew not whither; fled from the mere instinct of flight; the longing to be, “Anywhere, anywhere,—out of the world!”

CHAPTER XX:

MR. WARFIELD shut the door which shut out his wife, with a cold, slow deliberation, that took pleasure in the work, and made it last as long as might be. He cast no glance after the flying figure, but shut the door, and fastened it; then turned, and, went back into the library, and shut the door of that also. Then, to his surprise, he found that he was trembling, that he could hardly stand, that he must sit down. A sick faintness seized him, a sort of stupor, in which, though he retained consciousness, he could neither think nor move; only at intervals an involuntary trembling shook him from head to foot.

He sat thus some half hour—ages it seemed to him; but he was a strong man, in the full power of life, accustomed to self-control; and, by degrees, he regained the mastery over

himself. He checked the nervous trembling, struggled against the faintness, sat upright, and smiled in scorn of his own weakness.

"All this because a woman has gone out of my life!"

Then he looked slowly round the room, the empty room, and a feeling of great desolation swept over his soul. His arms folded on the table beside him, he bowed his head upon them, and sobbed—great, gasping sobs—that choked and rent him; sobs without tears, bringing no relief, which to utter was agony.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, and a fierce, eager light replaced the dumb despair in his eyes.

"Good God! If I were to lose her!" he exclaimed. "I never thought of that! There is the river, and she has had time! But no, she is a coward, she will not go to the river. Whither will she go? O whither? Dolt that I was to let her go so! Now, I may lose her, lose her for ever! not know one of the pangs she suffers,—not know how she lives,—not know when she dies! No, by Heaven! I will *not* lose her! Let me think,—whither would she go? To Lady Upton's? Perhaps. Yes,

she *will* go to her, now or afterwards; and try to make her story good. And I shall not lose her; I am not afraid that I shall lose her; I *will* not be afraid! But I must go now—at once—to Lady Upton; go before *her*, if that be possible; and then I must get a man to watch for her. Benson will know where to find me a man. Oh! you shall not escape me, let your feet flee ever so fast; Isabel, my wife!”

He rang.

“A Hansom, Thomas, instantly.”

“Is Lady Upton alone?” he asked of the servant who opened the door of the house in Grosvenor Square.

“Yes, sir.”

She had not come then; not yet; he was before her.

To Lady Upton he told his story briefly and sternly; without flinching. She listened in silence, and the faint beginnings of a cold smile gathered on her face—gathered to be repressed.

He saw it, though, and hated her for it; hated her for her hatred of Isabel, even while he felt that it gave him the power he wanted

to work his will. She might have stood between them; had she done so, he would have resented it, and hated her for that; she left his victim to him,—and for that also he hated her.

“Your news hardly surprises me,” she said, after a pause, during which the two stern faces had looked a challenge at each other. “Unfortunately you took a wrong view of Isabel’s character; few girls would have borne such extreme indulgence—she especially.”

“Excuse me, Lady Upton. Our views were different; but that is hardly relevant; certainly it is useless. *Now*, I think we may agree.”

“Ah! Perhaps we may! What do you mean to do?”

“I have turned her out of my house;—you agree in the propriety of that measure?”

“Certainly.”

“I mean to make her a small allowance, so that she may live in some poor, humble way, without more sin; if she be so inclined:—*you* would not have me give her the means to live richly, and flaunt her vice before us in streets and squares?”

“Hardly, Mr. Warfield. *I* shall not complain of the obscurity to which you may con-

demn her, nor of the meanness of her shamed life."

"Aye! *That* is what I mean; *that* is what I will do! Her life *shall* be shamed. Her story shall follow her; shall hunt her from every shelter, from every joy, from every hope; shall hunt her through life, shall hunt her to death!"

Lady Upton winced from this, and turned a shade paler.

"But this is terrible, Mr. Warfield!" she said. "And she is very young. It would be more merciful to kill her."

"It would. That is the reason why I have kept her alive."

"Her life cannot be too obscure, too mean, as I said before; but it would, I think, not be too much charity to leave her to find in it such peace and comfort as she may; they cannot be much! This dream of deadly persecution is worthy only of a savage."

"Lady Upton, that is what I shall do. If you disapprove,—why, take her to your house, and shelter her with your presence and your love! You can. Will you?"

"I take her; fallen, and dishonoured! I shelter her with love! Not if she lay dying across my door-step! No, she is yours, you *would* have her, you know! She bears *your* name, not *mine*, she is nothing to me; do with her what you will, for me. Only, I really do not see any use or advantage in killing her by inches, as you propose."

"No, probably not. You have never loved her. I have. However, we are fortunately agreed as to the main points; as I thought we should be. You are decided not to see her, I think?"

"Never."

"Nor read her letters?"

"Never."

"Have you heard any thing of Sir Harry? If he were to reappear, he would take her part against the world, of course."

"No fear of that. I wish there were!" she added, with a sigh. "No, I have never heard a word. But, where is she?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know! Then how—"

"Ah! I *shall* know,—soon. She will surely

come here to try for a refuge, and I will watch, and set others to watch. She will not escape—trust me.”

And Lady Upton, hearing the cruel voice, and seeing the merciless face of this man before her, found it in her heart to wish that she might; even though she had hated her all her life.

And he, having thus shut yet another door upon her, hastened to go to the man he had spoken of, Benson.

But this time he did not drive up to the door.

He got out half way through one of the wide streets turning out of Regent Street, and dismissed his cab; then walked up a narrow street, and turned out of that again into a quiet court, in the corner of which was an open door. He passed through this door and rang a bell on the left hand; when another door opened before him, and he entered a small, square room, where sat a man writing at a desk. Besides the desk, and the chair on which the man sat, there was in the room only one other chair, and a large iron safe against the wall.

The man who sat writing was Mr. Benson.

He looked up as Mr. Warfield entered, and rose from his chair, saying quietly, "Good morning, sir," while his face remained impassive, and did not render any of the surprise he felt on seeing his visitor; nay, more than surprise, annoyance; for he did not like *his* clients to compromise themselves. He had been employed, on Mr. Warfield's behalf, during the election, to ferret out damaging particulars relative to the opposition candidate; and he considered it highly imprudent that there should be a personal interview even yet; especially imprudent on Mr. Warfield's part to have come to his office.

However, he expressed nothing of this; but, having said good morning, and asked Mr. Warfield to take the solitary remaining chair, placed his pen behind his ear, and sat down again, in his place.

Mr. Warfield began to speak very quietly and calmly. But the man before him, used to watch all signs of feeling, instantly detected the repressed passion in the tones, and thought,

"*This* is no election business!"

"I want a man to watch," said Mr. Warfield, "a clever spy, in fact; one who can be

trusted to stick to his object through every thing; at all times and under all circumstances; and—to hold his tongue. Find such a man, and charge for him whatever you like!”

“Shall you want him long, sir?”

“Probably, for months; possibly, for years.”

“I have a man that will stick to a trail like a Red Indian, Sir, he was born to it; and I’ll answer for him that he won’t blab: but he’s not so good at striking one.”

“The man will answer the purpose. The person to be watched can be found without difficulty, I have no doubt of it. She will, I feel sure, be at a certain place, within a day or two.”

“She!” thought Mr. Benson. But he said nothing.

It was not his way to initiate any thing, or to help his clients to speak; he would sit, waiting quietly, any length of time, until they spoke, or went away. It was indifferent to him, which. If they went, they would return. So he sat waiting, placidly.

Mr. Warfield’s dark face burned. How *could* he tell this thing about his wife? Yet,—something he must say.

"What is the man's name,—is he here?"

"His name is Neeke, sir; he is not here."

"Then send him to my house as soon as you can; I will speak to him there."

"Very well, sir."

Another pause. And Mr. Warfield did not go—and Mr. Benson sat waiting.

Suddenly, Mr. Warfield spoke again.

"No, I will tell *you*;" he said, "and you shall give him his instructions, it will save time; and time might be valuable. It is Mrs. Warfield who is to be watched. She is nineteen years of age, of middle height, fair, with brown eyes and hair." Again he paused a moment, to think how she was dressed; what did she wear when she stood before him that morning? He had not known at the time, but now he remembered, and continued rapidly, "She wears a brown silk dress, black mantle, and straw bonnet trimmed with blue. She will, I have reason to believe, go to Lady Upton's house, in Grosvenor Square, in the course of to-day or to-morrow. This man, Neeke, can watch for her there; and, having found her, he is to follow her, no matter whither; and report to me."

“ Yes, sir. He shall go immediately.”

“ You think he is to be relied upon?”

“ Safe, sir, *quite* safe. The safest man I have.”

Mr. Warfield went away satisfied,—for the moment. He knew that Benson was to be trusted: little chance of escape for any one who was once placed under *his* charge; and *he* answered for Neeke.

So Mr. Warfield went away satisfied that his prey would not escape; but satisfied only for the moment.

He had not reached Regent Street, when already he began to doubt.

Might she not have come too soon, and have fled before the man was there; so that he would stand, watching, while she was leaving him farther and farther?

Nay, might she not be there, then, at that very moment, and the chance of her recognition be slipping away for ever; while he was walking away from it? •

The thought had hardly presented itself, when he hailed a passing Hansom, and, jumping in, shouted to the driver, in utter opposition to his usual quiet tone and language.

“Grosvenor Square! and drive like the devil!”

And he was there, in Grosvenor Square, again; and there was nothing to be seen:—nothing but carriages and horses, and people on foot; wealth, and misery, and joy; poverty, and want, and despair: things he was so used to see, they bore no meaning to him. No, there was nothing; no sign of Isabel, anywhere; no sign of the man, Neeke, anywhere; no sign of anything like a spy. So he must stay and play the spy himself. He would do that, the honourable gentleman, he was glad to be there to do it; he would do anything—but let her escape.

And he walked slowly round the Square, under the houses,—once, twice, thrice; he walked round the garden in the centre,—again, and yet again;—and there was no sign.

He could not stay and walk so, always. It became intolerable.

Yet he would not lose sight of the place. So he went a short distance up one street and another, leading out of the Square, and turned suddenly, when he reached the point where he

would have lost sight of it.; then came and walked round again;—again, and yet again.

He looked at his watch. Three hours! Surely she must have come, and gone. She might so well have come and gone; and the man ought to be on her track; and there were no signs of him yet.

Again he took a Hansom and dashed back to Mr. Benson's office. This time he entered hurriedly, in undisguised anxiety and dread that she might escape; that she *had* escaped.

Mr. Benson sat as before.

"Where, in heaven's name, is this man, Neeke?" said Mr. Warfield. "Don't you know that the hours are passing, that he may be too late, that perhaps he is already too late?"

"He was in Grosvenor Square half an hour after you left, sir; is there now, unless he's followed the lady."

"You are mistaken. I have been there myself; have just come thence: there is no sign of any man watching."

"Oh, no, sir! Neeke wouldn't do for *me*, if any one would take him to be watching. There's no mistake, sir; Neeke doesn't make mistakes."

"And you believe he is on the watch?"

"I know it, sir; I have been and seen him."

"You! And I never saw you!"

"No, sir. I wasn't walking in the Square, naturally; no more was Neeke. But there he is; and I don't believe the devil himself could get in or out without him seeing him,—not unless he made himself invisible!"

Mr. Warfield sighed, wearily. There was, then, nothing more to be done. He might go home; he *must* go home. The great fatigue, the mental strain, were telling even on his iron strength; and he *must* go home and rest, if he would keep his powers: and he wanted them,—all.

"Home and rest!" He uttered the words softly to himself, as he walked slowly along the streets. "Home and rest! And I have no home, and shall never rest any more!"

And a dull, aching pain, came over him. He was too tired to feel, he thought; too tired to suffer; too tired to think; surely nothing would hurt him any more!

And so he went on; saluting no acquaintances, seeing none; finding his way mechanically.

Mechanically he entered his house, and went to his room; mechanically he sat there, near

the window, gazing listlessly into the street, while the noises came to him fused into one murmuring hum, and lulled his tired senses.

He sat there in a sort of waking sleep for more than an hour, until his valet came to remind him that it was time to dress for dinner.

"Dinner!" he said, a little vacantly. "Ah, yes, of course,—dinner!"

And presently the dinner-bell rang, and he went down from his own room and entered the dining-room; and then he found that he could still feel.

There, at the top of the table, was Isabel's place, laid, as usual; there, where she had sat yesterday, and smiled upon him; where she had sat so many yesterdays! Where she was to sit never again!

For one moment he paused on his way to the table, and his face grew very pale; then he went on, saying to his sister, who had followed him in,—

"Priscilla, will you take the head of the table; and oblige me by sitting there in future?"

And she went, trembling. She had coveted this place, had waited for it with longing, had greedily watched the young wife slipping away

from it; and now she had got it. She had got it for evermore.

And she would willingly have laid her head in the dust if all that work could thereby have been undone; and she might again see her brother such as he had been under the light of those sweet, loving eyes, that were never to shine upon him any more.

The weary dinner was sat through. Weary hours of waiting followed.

There came no news.

And Mr. Warfield waited far into the night.

Pacing up and down in his library; sitting, listening; pacing again.

But no news came that night.

And when the long day, the longest of the year, the longest of his life, had passed; and when the dark night had also passed, and the dawn lightened the east once more; its light fell upon a man of middle age, whose face showed worn and marred, as he lay, thrown heavily on a sofa; asleep at last.

CHAPTER XXI.

“AT evening time there shall be rest.”

Had she heard the words, or read them, or dreamed them; or did they float to her on the air?

They came to her, and she knew what they meant, and looked around.

It was evening time, and she was just entering a village; should she find a rest there? She was tired, very tired, she found, now that she thought of it; and it was evening;—“and at evening time there shall be rest.”

She sighed wearily, and, turning aside, leaned against a gate, and looked up the village street.

Yes, truly, she was tired, very tired; her limbs trembled, a faintness stole over her. Why, she must have been walking for hours!

Where was she? Where had she been all those hours? Had she walked on and on all the time, or had she sunk now and again in weariness, and then risen once more to her flight? She did not know—she never knew.

But now it was evening time, and she was in a village; perhaps she might find a rest.

Only that dreadful faintness was stealing over her, she could hardly stand, even leaning against the gate; a darkness passed before her; with a great effort she grasped the gate with both hands, and uttered a passionate ejaculatory prayer.

“O, our Father, have mercy on me! Help me to find a rest!”

And she stood a minute, holding by the gate; and the darkness passed, and she was able to stand again without support. Then, with steps that tottered, she went on, looking for a rest.

And not finding it.

She passed cottage after cottage, not daring to enter; she saw the sign of an inn, and went towards it with renewed hope; but the sounds of loud voices and boisterous mirth came through the open windows, and the fumes of strong to-

bacco; and she caught glimpses, as in a cloud, of coarse, red faces, and eyes inflamed with drink.

There was no rest for her there.

So she went on, and passed more cottages, and came to the end of the village. And her limbs and sight were failing again, and she thought she must drop down and die—there, on the high road.

No, not on the road. She would go yet a few yards farther, and she might be able to turn into a field; or, the street ended there, and she could at least put herself under the hedge, out of sight.

So, with a last effort, she went on again. And there, close to her, was a bright little cottage, standing back from the road, which had been hidden by a group of trees, and in one of its windows the welcome sight, “Apartments to Let.”

With a gasping sigh, and tears in her eyes, she passed through the wicket gate, and went up a narrow path, between wallflowers, and southernwood and sweet lavender, and knocked at the open door of the cottage.

The knock was answered immediately by a brisk little woman in a cap that was of the whitest, and apron to match.

Surely here she could rest.

"You have apartments to let?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have ma'am, sure enough. But not what 'ud suit you, ma'am, I'm afraid," said the woman, looking at Isabel's rich dress; then, catching sight of the deadly pallor that was falling on her face at last, now, when she had reached a refuge and a help, she cried out, "But, goodness, gracious me! Come in, my dear lady, come in! Why you're a going right off into a dead swoond!"

And she seized hold of her, and dragged, rather than led her, into a little sitting-room on the right side of the passage, and laid her on a sofa there.

And unconsciousness came to her, and she was at rest.

But this was a rest that did not suit the good woman at all. She fetched water, and sprinkled her face, and bathed her hands, and presently got her to swallow a little.

And she revived, and opened her eyes once

more, and met the kindly ones bent on her in sympathy.

"There! you're better now!" said the voice belonging to them.

But they were very sharp, too, those kindly eyes; and there was a somewhat puzzled expression underlying their sympathy.

"You are very good!" said Isabel, faintly, looking at her with her sweet, sad smile. And closed her eyes again, and rested.

The woman sat beside her for some minutes in silence, then said,—

"If you please, ma'am, I'll leave you now, you won't go off again; and I'll make you a cup o' tea. There's nothing freshens one up like a cup o' tea. And after that you'll, p'raps, feel well enough to go on; I can get you a carriage from the inn."

A faint tinge of colour came into the pale cheeks, and Isabel sighed, and put her hand on her new-found friend, as she attempted to rise.

"Wait a moment, please," she said. "I do not want to go—not to-night. I am very tired, and will stay here with you, if you will let me."

"Indeed, ma'am," was the reply, while the

puzzled, uncomfortable expression grew stronger in the eyes that had been bent upon her, but now turned away. "Indeed, ma'am, I don't know. That is—I'm sorry; but it is but a poor place, noways fit for you; and I never let for less than a week. You'll feel like another body, you'll see, when you've had the tea; and a carriage will soon take you home."

"But I fear I am a long way from home, and I am so tired! I have walked too far, and lost myself,—where am I?"

"This is Wavetree, ma'am; ten miles north of London."

"Ten miles! and I am so tired! Please let me stay here to-night?"

And the soft, brown eyes, looked very pitifully into those other eyes, while large tears gathered in them.

Now this woman was but tender-hearted, notwithstanding her sharp, bright eyes; as she had acknowledged to herself, bitterly, many and many a time, vowing never to be so "soft" any more; vows which went the way of many others.

She could not resist those tearful eyes; that pale young face; but she made the voice, in

which she answered, as gruff as she could possibly; by way of atonement for the foolishness.

“Stay, then, ma’am, if you want so to stay;” she said, “but I don’t see the why nor wherefore. And I never *am* used to take any one for a night, and p’raps you’ll consider that in the payment. And my terms are fifteen shillings a week for an odd week, or so; but when lodgers stop long they have it for ten. So now you know all about it.”

Isabel felt for her purse, while the colour rushed over face and neck, for oh! if she should have left it, or lost it! But, no, it was there, and she took it out, saying eagerly,

“I will pay you now, at once; and thank you very much.” She offered a sovereign. “And will you tell me your name, please?”

“My name is Brent, ma’am; but I couldn’t think of taking all that just for one night. And I hope you’ll excuse it, if I seemed put out like; you see one never knows what folks is; and I’m sure I shall be proud to do what I can to make you comfortable. And many apologies, ma’am.”

And Isabel lay back again, and felt that she

might rest; and with this, a faint surprise at the effect produced by one little piece of gold. Poor Isabel! She did not know the power of the talisman; how it gives respect and a fair name, and all the virtues; and she had yet to learn, alas! what suffering, and contumely, and shame, the want of it can bring.

Now, she had found a rest. And she lay still, resting, resting only; soothed by the humming sound of Mrs. Brent's voice, as she bustled in and out; it gave her a feeling of safety, of human, womanly care about her.

And Mrs. Brent's voice generally *was* humming; it was rarely quiet when she had any one to speak to, or when she had not.

She stirred up the fire in her little kitchen, and put on the kettle; then, with a sudden inspiration, rushed into the room again, saying,

"Why, what a stupid! If you've lost yourself, you'll have had no dinner! I'll just run to the butcher's for a chop, I shan't be a minute, and it 'll do while the kettle boils."

"Please, don't," said Isabel. "You are very kind, but I could not possibly eat it."

"Then will you try an egg, ma'am? I've got some beauties, as fresh as fresh can be."

“Only the tea, please.”

And the weary eyes closed, soon to open again.

“Don’t you have no fears about the bed, ma’am, I’ll see to it as soon as ever I’ve brought you your tea; and I always sleep on it myself when it’s empty, so it’s well-aired; there’s no fear.”

“Thank you.”

And, between her rushes, Mrs. Brent had got out her best china, and gathered mustard and cress, and pretty red radishes that lay among the green, like flowers; and made toast, and put bits of parsley round a pat of fresh butter; and now she bore it all in, in triumph, feeling that she had made it, “as good as a picture.”

Then, to pour out a cup of tea, and butter a morsel of toast, and take them to the couch and tempt Isabel to eat; to get her to the table, and leave her there, a little revived, a little hopeful, and very, very thankful to have found such a rest; was the work of a quarter of an hour: and with every minute of that quarter of an hour her heart grew softer and softer, and Isabel entered farther therein.

She went from the little sitting-room direct into her own bedroom, and out of her drawers took the one cherished pair of fine linen sheets which lay always in lavender; then, from under them, a long, fine, white nightdress, given to her by a former mistress, and preserved religiously for her burial. She looked at it, and smoothed it lovingly with her hands; it seemed a sort of sacrilege to use it for any purpose but that one, it was a sacred thing; and yet,—and yet;—surely love, and pity, and charity, to a sorely stricken soul, were more sacred still. A sorely stricken soul. That had been made plain to her; notwithstanding the purse of gold, and the rich dress. “Poor lamb!” she said, still stroking the nightdress, “Poor lamb! You’ll be none the worse for *her* wear, and if you were? why, she should have you all the same!”

And she turned and shut the drawer with a bang, and carried off her treasures with rapid determination.

And the evening passed, and it was night, and thankfully Isabel went to her rest.

“At evening time there shall be rest,” she thought, again, “surely God sent those words

to me, and He has sent me the Rest! But those are not the words; I remember, now. "At evening time it shall be light." Why did I think of Rest, I wonder. Light! And there shall be rest in that Light! Thank God. He *has* sent Rest; He *will* send Light."

And she kneeled to say her evening prayer.

Still, the words came to her, "At evening time it shall be light," "At evening time there shall be Rest;" these, and no others.

Then she cried out in anguish of spirit, "O why am I so cold, so hard, so dull! I will thank God. I *do* thank Him; my Father who has cared for me. *My* Father! *Our* Father! —I can say 'Our Father.'"

And she said it.

And as she said it, a great revelation was made to her from the simple, wonderful words that she had said so often, all the days of her life. A great peace came over her; she *felt*, she *knew*, that she was in the hands, in the care, of the Everlasting Father, who pitieth His children with a father's pity, who comforteth them with a mother's comfort. "Thy Will be done." She said it from the heart, with a Faith that soared far beyond all Resignation.

It became an aspiration, a prayer. What could be higher, what could be better, what more to be desired and longed after; for her, for her husband, for her child; for all the universe, for every single human soul, than that; "Thy Will be done!" *Thy* Will, O our Father! Thine. The All-merciful, All-wise, All-loving.

And this thought was in her, with her; it filled her soul with a great peace, a wonderful sense of safety and rest. Wrapped in it, steeped in it, she lay down; a child in the Father's care, a trusting child; lay down and slept.

And dreams of joy were with her as she slept; and a strange, bright smile lay on her face. Was the smile caught from her baby's face, as she saw him in that happy dream? Surely; or, it had dropped from the angels. Only on those who have lately entered on this earthly state, and those nearing its farther borders, are such smiles ever seen.

The next morning, when Mrs. Brent came to take away the breakfast service, she consulted her on the means of getting to town; for she had resolved, as Mr. Warfield had foreseen, to

go to her mother. In this, her extremity, she would surely help her, she thought, though she had never loved nor helped her, all her life long ; for this was a thing so awful and so terrible, it must touch her, and then, perhaps, who knew? Her heart once opened to her, she might love her after all !

And at the thought the colour came into her face, and her eyes looked very bright. For she had pined for this mother-love, always.

“ Lor ! Ma’am ! ” said Mrs. Brent, “ Why you don’t look like the same body as you did last night ! What a thing sleep is, for sure ! And *so* young ! If I didn’t see, now, as you’ve got a wedding-ring, I could just fancy you’d run away from school ! ”

“ O Mrs. Brent ! Why, I have a baby ! ”

“ Never ! Then no wonder you’re in a hurry to get back. Well, if you wouldn’t mind the ’bus, Ma’am, it’s very respectable, and he’s a nice, civil sort of man, is Jim as drives it ; and it leaves the Inn at 10 o’clock, and we’ve just the time to get there comfortable ; for if you’re late, you have to sit anyhow, and it takes you to Oxford Street for two-and-six.”

“Then I will go by it, as it goes immediately. Get my bonnet and mantle, if you please. O, I forgot! I beg your pardon, I will fetch them.”

“Not on no account, Ma’am; I’ll fetch them with the greatest of pleasures.”

But Mrs. Brent, with all her good-will, shook her head on the way. “There’s no making head nor tail of it,” she said to herself, “A born lady that’s never done a hand’s turn for herself in all her life, as a blind man could see; and wandering all forlorn like, at nightfall! It’s past my making out.”

And it certainly looked no better, nor clearer, when Isabel, seated in the omnibus close to the door, prompted by a sudden, strange fear, coming she knew not whence, leaned forward and said hesitatingly,

“If,—if,—anything happened,—if I were to come back;—you would take me in, Mrs. Brent?”

“In course, Ma’am, as in duty bound, seeing you’ve paid more than a week, and been only one night,” replied Mrs. Brent.

But the tone was cold, and fell very coldly

on the sensitive ear that heard it. But what could she do? Only look sadly at Mrs. Brent, and sigh, and take patience.

Alone, amongst strangers, she felt timid and nervous. But when the first sensation of novelty had worn off, finding that no one appeared to remark her, and that she was free to sit quiet, she began to notice the different passengers, and listen to their talk. And this helped her. The real presence of other human beings, their actual sayings and doings, pushed her own suffering back for the time; deadened, in some degree, her sense of the terrible importance of the errand on which she was bent; and kept under the lurking fear lest it should fail.

She listened to them. And presently began to wonder what their lives were; what were *their* great cares, and miseries, and burdens? Or, were they taking the joys now, and the cares, only on the way to meet them?

And these thoughts led her far, very far: till she heard the voices and noticed the people no more; but thought, and dreamed, and wondered; about Life, and Love, and Death; Poverty and Riches; Misery and Joy; Hope and Despair;—

as never once in all her life before she had thought or dreamed.

Still that lurking fear beneath her hopes! On leaving the omnibus, she asked at what hour they would return, and noted the place and time carefully.

Quickly, very quickly, and with a strange flutter at her heart, she walked to her mother's house, and knocked.

When the door opened, she would have gone in; but the man, holding the door, stood before her.

"If you please, ma'am, my lady's not at home."

"Not at home! So early, James! You must have made a mistake."

"No, ma'am, no mistake. My lady's not at home."

"I will come in and wait, then."

But James did not move, and the colour came into his face.

"James!"

"I beg pardon, ma'am, but indeed I can't, I daren't. My lady's orders was most particular, — 'Not at home to Mrs. Warfield. *Never* at home to Mrs. Warfield.'"

Her temples throbbed, and there was 'a buzzing sound in her ears; but she said, steadily,

"There is a mistake, James. Open the door, and I will explain to Lady Upton."

"I'm very sorry, ma'am, I'm sure, but I daren't, I really daren't! My lady's orders was most strict. On no account was I to let you in: but I would, Miss Isabel; yes, if I lost my place for it, I would. But it wouldn't be no manner o' use. My lady's like a raging bear, made o' flint—stone-flint! She and Pearson quarrelled awful yesterday; and Pearson went right off, and,—now, if I wasn't agoing to forget! She left a letter in hopes as you'd come, and here it is."

And he dived into his pocket, and extracted a letter, which he delivered to Isabel.

She took it, mechanically, and still stood there, not thinking of moving; thinking, "Can it be true? *Is* it true? Am I shut out, hopelessly; and can I never get in any more?"

James' voice roused her.

"I beg pardon, ma'am, but—we don't believe it, Miss Isabel, not none of us!"

She staggered slightly, and shrank; then,

with a haughty gesture, the first of her life, turned, and began to walk away.

But haughtiness was not in her nature. Another moment and she was back, to find James still holding the door, and looking sadly after her.

"Thank you, James," she said; "good bye."

"Oh, thank *you*, Miss Isabel; it's very good of you. Good bye, if I may make so bold; but it won't be for long, I hope: I'm 'most 'sure it won't be for long. If Sir Harry would but come home!"

"Good bye, James; I hope he will, some day."

And then she crossed the road, and stood against the railings enclosing the garden; stood and looked at the house from which she was shut out.

A lady came to one of the open windows: surely she did not know who was watching there! Her eyes fell on Isabel, and rested there, in a cold, unrecognizing stare. Isabel met the look fully,—her eyes neither drooped nor turned aside; and in their full gaze were unutterable sadness and reproach. So they stood and looked at each other—the mother

and daughter—for some seconds, that seemed very long. Then Isabel bowed slowly, with gentle dignity, to the face that never changed; and passed away from under her mother's eyes, out of her mother's path,—for ever.

Passed;—all but the haunting eyes. They followed her, and accused her, and persecuted her. She woke, to see them; she slept, to dream them; to flee from them, to forget them, became the work of her life: and, for a time, she almost succeeded. Then, after many days, they came back; and this time they left her, never again.

Oh, the weary, weary hours, pacing the streets, walking in the Park, resting under the trees, till it should be time for that omnibus to go back! The weary, weary journey back to Wave-tree; the bitter welcome of Mrs. Brent's constrained greeting; the *felt* suspicion and distrust; the hope deferred, that made her heart sick!

“O Gerald, Gerald!” she moaned to herself, as she sank on the little couch.

And this time, when Mrs. Brent brought her tea, and offered it with cold service,—

“I can't, I can't,” she cried. “Oh, take it

away, please; and don't look at me so, Mrs. Brent. I am not wicked, indeed I am not: but my heart is broken, I think,—I am so miserable! Oh! if God would let me die!”

“My dear young lady, my poor child!” And the tea was put down, and the motherly arms thrown round her. “God forgive me! *me*, that have had a daughter of my own! There, my dear, there! Cry, it will do you good. And if you *had* done anything, what business have *I*, a miserable sinner, to stick myself up? Who knows what any of us 'ud do, if it came in our way? But now, you know, this 'll never do; you're just fainting for want,—that's what you are; and have something you must, and shall, as sure as my name's Martha Brent. And don't go and say no more about dying, and such like. Time does a deal; and you'd a vast sight better think of living, and putting right what's wrong—leastways if there is anything wrong.”

Hope deferred! Yes, deferred; not dead. No, not dead!

There was the letter to be written to Gerald; she had resolved on that while she was coming back.

And she wrote it. With eager, trembling

fingers, that would not keep pace with the rushing thoughts, the passionate feelings, the anguish of entreaty,—she wrote. It was herself, her very soul and spirit, that she poured upon the paper, as she sat there, writing, with dry, burning eyes—fast, very fast; for it must be posted that night.

When she had written, she read; and her tears gathered and flowed, and her heart was comforted.

“He must believe,” she thought; “he must feel! He loved me so. O Gerald, Gerald, make haste and come, make haste!”

And she took Mrs. Brent to the Post Office, and, with her own hands, put the precious letter into the box.

Mr. Warfield had lived through another day, and had no news. At that very time he was thinking of it, wondering vaguely how he *had* lived through it, where he had been, what he had done? And a confused picture of streets, and houses, and endless faces, and weary paces in his room; and streets, and houses, and faces again, and yet again, passed before him wearily. And he drew his hand over his forehead, and sighed; and his arms fell heavily by his sides.

But, hark! There is a knock,—a soft, low knock, at the hall door. Was it a knock? Yes,—there it was again! surely. Oh, the fools! Why did no one go! And he strode towards the bell, then changed his purpose, and went and opened the door himself.

On the step stood a slight, pale, timid-looking man, with the air of an over-worked clerk; a man too meek, too weak, too harmless, to rouse suspicion in any mind.

When Mr. Warfield saw him, he could willingly have killed him.

“Why the devil didn’t you ring?” he said.

“I beg your pardon, sir, I’m sure; but I thought you might prefer my knocking; gentlemen often do.”

I prefer your knocking! Who are you?”

“My name is Neeke, if you please, sir.”

“*You*, Neeke! And you stand there! Come in, man, come! Are you mad, to keep me waiting—now!”

Neeke went in. He glanced at his dusty boots, at the mat, at Mr. Warfield’s face,—and followed him fast without any attempt to wipe them.

And Mr. Warfield shut the door, and sat in

a chair, and the man, Neeke, stood before him; and there was silence.

What of awful, of irrevocable, was hidden under that weak face?

Whatever it was he must meet it. Was he a man to tremble and flinch? did he not *dare* to face his fate?

And his brow set in a deep frown, and he took his hands off the chair they had grasped involuntarily, and held them there, still, before him.

"Well?" he said.

"Well, sir, I went to Grosvenor Square, according to orders."

"Leave all that. Is she found?"

"Yes, sir."

"Alive?"

"O, yes, sir! The lady is at Wavetree, in a cottage, kept by a Mrs. Brent, a clean, decent body; respectable, *I* should say."

"You *know* she is there?"

"Followed her every step of the way, sir. Never lost sight of her, sir, since she came to Grosvenor Square, soon arter 12; walked up and down and round about, and stopped under trees, sir; and went on the top of the 'bus

which she was inside, and saw her safe in the cottage, and learnt as she was going to stop the night there."

He had got her, then; he held her; she was his, to do with as he would. He clenched his hand together, crushing something that was not in it, and a flash of triumph lit up his worn face.

"Very well," he said. "You know what you have to do. Watch and report to me; nothing more for the present. Mind you do it."

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir. When and where must I report, sir?"

"Here. On Saturday evening. Oftener, if necessary. And here's a sovereign for you. I will give you the same each time you come, as long as you do your work to my mind; and you need say nothing of it to Mr. Benson."

"Thank you, sir. I shan't fail, sir; be sure."

"Now you can go. Good night."

"Yes, sir. May I open the door, if you please, sir?"

And Mr. Warfield felt ashamed. For the first time he felt the meanness, the littleness,—

felt that he was dealing with a spy. But he *would* not be ashamed; he would not admit that there was cause for shame; openly the man should go, openly he should come again; had he not a right to receive whom he would?

“Ring, if you please, and the servants will open the door for you.”

“Thank you, sir. Good night, sir.” And, with a low bow, that hardly seemed to fit his occupation, Neeke went out.

The next morning Mr. Warfield sat at breakfast, with a heap of letters tumbled out at his side, reading them as he ate; no need now to keep this hour free that he might taste it fully! He breakfasted alone, and worked meanwhile.

He came to *the* letter.

“And she has dared!”

And he dropped it suddenly, as if it had been a scorpion that had stung him.

The letter—Isabel’s letter. Nay, her life.

It lay there before him, and he sat and looked at it; he took it up, and broke the seal; then, threw it on the ground, and crushed it with his foot.

“I will not—I will *not*! I am mad. Do I not know the power of the syren? Do I not

know how she can wrap herself in seeming purity and light—aye, to deceive the very angels! I will *not* read. Nay, I will not keep the thing; some day I might be weak; I will burn it *now*."

There was no fire—no need for fire *now*! He rang, and ordered one to be lit, and went on with his breakfast, and read his other letters; with that one letter under his feet.

And the fresh air of the summer morning came to him perfumed over the flowers, and he loathed it; and the sun shone into the room, and he hated it. Moreover, it would not let the fire burn.

"Draw down the blinds," he said, savagely; "can't you see that the fire will never burn with that sun on it!"

The man started up, and did as he was bid; and, as he stooped again to his work, cast a quick, inquisitive glance at his master's face, bent over the letters.

But even yet the fire burned very badly; still it was enough. Mr. Warfield had finished breakfast, and was impatient to do his work.

"Leave it," he said.

Then, when he was alone, he got up and

picked up the letter—the poor, soiled, crumpled letter—and walked to the fireplace; and, as he walked, the flower-scented air came to him again, and he felt sick. Was he never to see a flower, never to smell a perfume, without seeing her, too, before him?

Still, he did not drop the letter into the fire; he held it, and looked at it again—the fine, delicate writing he knew so well; looked, and hesitated; but suddenly he stretched out his arm, and held it over the blaze, and the corner lighted, and went out.

Then, he lighted it again, and it burned; slowly, slowly; charred rather than burned.

The heat reached his fingers, and at last he dropped it into the blaze; but the air took it, and floated it up, away into blackness and darkness; and, as it took it, showed him plainly the words he knew so well, had dwelled on so often, had kissed so fondly,—“Yours for ever!”

“Yours for ever.” He looked at the words; he said them, slowly, musingly, aloud,—“Yours for ever!” Then cried with fierce anguish,—

“O, the liar! The black, damned liar! I am glad they are burned; I am glad! Would they might go on burning for ever!”

CHAPTER XXII.

AND Isabel waited.

The first day waited hopefully, listening for carriage-wheels; the carriage that was to bring her husband and take them home together.

She would not leave the house lest she should not be there to meet him; but she flitted in and out of the little garden, and made the acquaintance of every flower in it; and joyed in the fresh summer air, and gathered a bouquet of rose-buds and mignonette, and fastened it in her dress;—for he must not see her without flowers, and she was sure he would come; very, *very* sure.

And all the afternoon she was sure; but, somehow, she got a little tired, and lay down.

And the flowers withered on her breast, and the darkness fell: and he had not come.

But what of that? He had gone out of Town; he could not leave the House; a hundred things might have happened to keep him; but to-morrow he would come; yes, to-morrow. She was very sure he would come to-morrow. Or, he might be ill! then she would have a letter, it might be a letter: she would be ready when the postman passed in the morning in case it should be only a letter.

And she was ready, standing at the little gate; and watched him come along, and pass on, and disappear.

There was no letter. Then he *must* be coming to-day.

But she was not *quite* so sure. She walked slowly in the narrow garden path, and was very soon tired. Mechanically she got a few flowers, but she hardly saw them.

She was listening. Listening in doubt, in feverish anxiety. The glare of the sun hurt her, the song of the birds, the bright joyousness of the summer day. She went in and drew down the blind, and sat near the window, where, through a crevice at the side, she could see down the road, watching.

After her early dinner she felt she could not

return to that weary watch; she tried the garden; that also became intolerable: so once again she lay on the couch, and hoped, and prayed, and tried to sleep.

But she only listened.

Horses, carriages, schoolboys running races, the postman on his round, the girl that brought the milk; every sound that neared and passed, raised and crushed a hope.

And again the flowers withered on her breast, and the darkness fell; and still he had not come.

And she went up to her bed heavily, with meek patience; and tried to sleep, and not to listen.

But every throbbing nerve was all alive, and would not, could not rest: as the hope waxed faint, the senses strained the more to hold it; and she listened—the whole night through.

Listened yet awhile the next morning; but gathered no flowers, never crossed the threshold. Soon a kind of stupor came over her, and she listened no more; only sat still, and white, and patient, with folded hands; while her hope faded and withered with every fleeting hour;

and died with the dying day, before her weary eyes.

And then she went to bed and slept. That anguish was over. Her hope was dead.

Dead and buried.

The postman, as he came up the path on the fourth morning, stirred it to no new life; nor did the letter which Mrs. Brent brought and put eagerly into her hand, with a look of hope and pleasure on her face.

It was a square, blue letter, addressed in a hand she did not know, to

“Mrs. Warfield,

“Wallflower Cottage,

“Wavetree.”

She took it listlessly, and looked at it before breaking the seal.

“Is this Wallflower Cottage, Mrs. Brent?” she said.

“O, yes, ma’am. Haven’t you seen the name on the board at the end of the house? But Lor! I forgot; how should you? when the honeysuckle’s been and grown right over

it! But it *is* Wallflower Cottage, and has been this twenty years, ever since it was built; and the man as built it was that fond of wallflowers he filled his garden with 'em, and so folks called it Wallflower Cottage, and he was that pleased with the name, he had it painted on a board and stuck up; and there it's been ever since, and is now, only the honeysuckle's been and crept over it—as I was a saying."

So Mrs. Brent ran on, hoping that Isabel would open her letter and read it, but she only held it in her hand; she wanted no eyes on her when she read it, so she waited till it pleased Mrs. Brent to go away.

Then she opened it and read it through steadily, with no sign of emotion, save a deepening colour that gathered as she read, and left a dark red flush upon her face when she had finished.

“ Lincoln’s Inn Fields,

“ June 24th, 1853.

“ To Mrs. Warfield,

“ Wallflower Cottage,

“ Wavetree.

“ MADAM,

“ We are instructed by Mr. Warfield, to inform you that the sum of £50, fifty pounds, is placed to your credit at the Westminster Bank, and that a like sum will be paid to your account, quarterly.

“ We are also to say that any applications or appeals will be useless; except only in the matter of the amount of your allowance; and should you wish to have this increased, a proposition to us on the subject may be entertained.

“ We are, Madam,

“ Your obedient servants,

“ POCKET & PURL.”

The deep red flush covered her very brow. She crushed the letter in both hands, and flung it from her.

“ How dares he, how dares he!” she cried.

“And to fling his money at me like a beggar! His money! Yes, it *is* his money, I have nothing; nothing in the world! But I will never touch it, never! He cannot *make* me take it; and I will not!

“O, Gerald, Gerald!

“And my baby, my little baby; that knows me and loves me! Am I never to have him, never even to see him, again? O God, it is *too* hard! I cannot bear it; I cannot!”

And she fell on her knees, and burst into passionate weeping and wailing; crying again, and yet again,

“I cannot bear it! I *cannot*!”

The cry of anguish sent up by thousands, by hundreds of thousands, of agonized hearts, into the smiling, unmoved heavens, since the world began.

“I cannot, I cannot!”

Ah! you little know, poor sufferer entering on the ways of pain, what can be borne, what *must* be borne: be the terrified shrinking never so great; the miserable wails never so pitiful!

Will Pain, and Grief, and Sorrow, turn aside for them? Not one jot. Not one least iota! Merciless, Immutable, Irresistible, they march

on: indifferent if their path be over quivering hearts; over racked souls whose very life chords are cracking and straining; indifferent if it be over Youth or Age; Crime, Innocence, Beauty. Where their path lies, there they go; Inscrutable, Inevitable.

And we; we cry we cannot bear!

And writhe, and moan, and struggle for escape. And they are on us; over us; have passed away for that time. And we rise, maimed, crushed, bleeding; but alive: for, we have yet more to bear!

And Isabel arose; but not soon.

She lay prostrate in her misery all that day; helpless, despairing.

In the afternoon came some boxes containing a part of her wardrobe; but this last blow fell harmless; she knew the worst already, and could suffer no more. She only said to Mrs. Brent,

“Put them away, please; anywhere out of sight.”

In the morning, she arose.

Worn, weary, sadly hurt: but not unto death.

She arose and faced her position, and decided

on her life; inasmuch as was left to her to decide.

She read Pearson's letter again, carefully. The loving, passionate, hasty letter, blurred and blotted with tears and ink, that yet bore its message well; a message of love, and devotion, and faith, strong as life, strong as death.

It held great balm and comfort, and it was with a sigh that Isabel finally folded it, and laid it aside.

"But I could not live upon her savings, my poor, dear nursie; not while I have health and strength; it would be very comfortable, very happy, in that dear old Hope Cottage; but it would not be right. Some day, perhaps, if I get money enough, she may come and live with me; or, if I cannot get money, if I grow weak and ill, and ready to die; *then*, I may go to her. So, I have a refuge, always a refuge, at the last."

Then she thought of the Vernons. She might go to them; they would welcome her with open arms. What, go and be a burden on them, overburdened already? And the shame of it! No, not that. The idea of her uncle presented itself, and, at the notion of

help from him, she smiled, even in her misery; and passed on.

And there was no one else; not one to help her; she must help herself; she must get her own living.

But how?

And then the thought of the £200 a year offered to her, presented itself once more. She could live on that, she supposed, as they offered it to live on, even go to Pearson; *ought* she to take it? She could not, she would not. Every instinct, every feeling in her, rose up in revolt against it: living or dying, she would never take one farthing of that money! She would try to live; would work, if she might, to get the means of living; hoping for the time when Harry should come home, and she might have her child again; she would try with all her might to live, would fight bravely to the last: —but, if she could not live, if she were beaten; well, she could but die; and she could go home to Pearson to die.

She counted the money in her purse, £20. Clearly, she must find some way of getting her living, earning her bread, soon.

Easy to say, hard to do.

Specially hard for any lady ; involving, in the doing, much suffering and many humiliations; humiliations which do not tend to humility. But Isabel took no thought of these small miseries, did not feel them when they came; for long the ache of her great wound swallowed up all lesser pains.

Ignorantly, and bravely, if not hopefully, she resolved to do her task. Her spirit of patient endurance, trained so long, was roused to action, and in its strength she entered on her thorny path, in its strength followed it; to the end.

She called Mrs. Brent, and met her first great difficulty fairly and boldly.

“Mrs. Brent,” she said, “you have been very kind and attentive, very good to me. I want to stay with you;—Wait, please, and listen to what I have to say, before you speak. The circumstances attending my coming to you, with what you have seen since, are very suspicious; you would like to have them explained, you would like to know all my history. Now, I can tell you nothing, absolutely nothing, except this; that of any actual wrong I am innocent; *as innocent as my little baby, whose*

face I long for night and day: and, I hope that some day this will be made clear; nay, I am sure it will: but the day may be far distant. Do you believe me? Will you help me?"

"I believe you, ma'am; your face is like the face of the baby you speak of for goodness and sweetness; you're as good as gold I'd swear before the parson! And what I can do, I will; only that's precious little, for I'm but a poor woman, and have next to nothing but what I get from my lodgers."

"O I didn't mean in that way," said Isabel. "I wish to stay with you, and I want to begin to get my own living; I must. Now, do you know any little children I could teach?"

"My dear young lady! You see people always want references and that;—and even *I* couldn't say I know any thing about you! Or else there's Mrs. Moreton, the clergyman's wife; she's a heap of little children, and glad enough no doubt she'd be to get them off her hands a good piece of every day; and she's a kind, good soul as ever lived: but I don't think, I really don't, that she'd take a perfect stranger like. Is there *no* one you could refer to, ma'am?"

"No one! What I do, I must do alone."

"Then it's no use to go, not a bit," said Mrs. Brent, decidedly.

"Please show me the way, and I will try," answered Isabel, as decidedly. "It can do no harm to try, you know."

"Why, who'd ever have thought you'd such a spirit! Try then, my dear; and good luck attend you! See, I can show you the turn to the house out of the garden; but, excuse me, ma'am, couldn't you find a plainer dress to put on before you go?"

Isabel glanced at her trailing silk garments: incongruous, truly, they would look in the clergyman's simply furnished house, worn by a person seeking a situation there, as daily governess.

She smiled as she answered,

"Thank you, Mrs. Brent, it would indeed have been foolish; and I should not have thought of it. You are helping me very much, you see."

So Mrs. Warfield, of Warfield Chase, sought out the plainest dress she could find and walked in it through the heat and dust; seeking a way to gain her living.

Mrs. Moreton received her at once, as she did every one who asked for her; and, after hearing what she had to say, sat with a puzzled expression of countenance, a prey to conflicting thoughts and wishes.

She was an impetuous, affectionate, little woman, much given to act first and think afterwards; she was attracted by Isabel, and felt all the relief it would be to have her little ones in safe care, and be left free for a while; but the memory of many mistakes and impositions came to her and held her back. It was strange to see a lady of such style seeking a teacher's place, especially to little children; it was extremely strange that she could give no references. And yet she looked so true, so pure, so good! . And there were many sufferers in this world who were no great sinners!

And in this mind she spoke.

"I fear," she said, "I could not afford to pay what you would expect. I cannot give more than £40 a year, and that you will no doubt think too little for all the mornings."

"Indeed, madam, I will take it gladly," said Isabel, "and teach your children all I can. I love little children."

The balance weighed down more heavily on Isabel's side. Mrs. Moreton looked kindly at the graceful lady before her; noted the soft, low voice, and thought how such association would soften and polish her girls; rough from constant romping with their brothers.

"If you could, at least, refer me to the school where you were educated?" she said.

"I was never at school, madam," answered Isabel, with a sinking heart. "I had a governess at home. But, O dear madam, you may trust me with your children, you may indeed! Only try: it will be a great kindness."

Mrs. Moreton had risen to go and consult her husband, but on Isabel's appeal, she re-seated herself.

She had a way of her own of dealing with her husband. She never opposed nor resisted his opinions when once expressed; but when she thought they would be inconvenient, she adopted the plan of wilful ignorance. In the present instance she knew perfectly well what his opinion would be, so she did not go to ask it; but, on hearing Isabel's appeal, sat down again and made up her mind to take the risk. After all, what was it? The children would be in

the house with her, she would be able to detect anything wrong immediately.

"Well," she said, "I will try; but I shall be called very imprudent, I fear; I must rely on you to justify me. Only let me have no cause to repent, and it is I who will have to be grateful. It is not often that a poor clergyman can have such an instructress for his children. When can you begin?"

"Thank you, madam, thank you very much!" said Isabel in a voice that trembled. "And do not fear, I shall give you no cause to repent. And if to-morrow morning will be agreeable to you, I will come then."

"To-morrow, be it then. You are very prompt, Miss—see only how imprudent I am! Why, I don't even know your name!"

"I am Mrs. Warfield, madam,"—and as she spoke she flushed painfully, feeling it would tell against her: but she would enter into no deception, *that* was over for ever, she would hold to her own name.

"You seem very young," said Mrs. Moreton, looking grave, "perhaps your husband?"—

"Pardon me, madam, I can tell you nothing, literally nothing. But your children will be

as safe with me as with their mother. Dear madam, do but try?" And she looked beseechingly into the kind, motherly eyes bent so gravely on her.

"Well, Mrs. Warfield," said Mrs. Moreton, with a sigh, "we will try, then; but I fear, I greatly fear, I am doing a foolish thing."

"Say a kind one, madam; an act of Christian love and charity to one who needs it sorely. Ah! miseries are not all sins; though they are so looked upon."

"No,—and yet—. Well, I will trust you; I *do* trust you. Can you be here at nine to-morrow, and remain until twelve?"

"Certainly, madam."

And Isabel walked home with bent head, dreaming, almost hoping; thankful that she had made that first great step which had looked so impossible; that she had found work.

And soon these children whom she loved, loved her, as children will; and brought a little colour into the pale cheeks, light to the eyes, and elasticity to the step that went to them: for they watched for her coming as for a precious thing, and hastened to meet her with

beaming faces, and would fain have kept her with them always; their dear, good, kind, clever, wonderful Mrs. Warfield!

And Mrs. Moreton echoed the children's welcome, the children's love. She rejoiced for them and with them; and also for herself in the relief from the constant pressure of all their boisterous young spirits; she was younger, lighter, brighter, than she had been for years.

And soon Mr. Moreton smiled on her, too. He could write in peace; and sit and think without that ever-present nervous dread of coming noise and riot which had spoiled his rare intervals of quiet.

She had brought Peace. Peace to the heads of the house, which spread around them and penetrated everywhere; as Irritability, the curse of over-worked minds and bodies, had previously done.

She had brought Peace, and the Peace smiled on her and welcomed her in the faces of all the household, from the master to the odd man-of-all-work, whom she sometimes passed in the garden.

And their warmth warmed her, and she revived; and she, too, smiled.

Then she had a treasure in the house, a gift of God, a child angel.

And this angel came to her when she had been not many days.

Came and stood in the doorway of the room where she was giving her lessons, framed as in a picture; a little, rosy, golden-haired girl angel of some two summers; stood gravely, looking with wide, blue eyes at Isabel.

And she sat still, holding back the rushing tenderness that almost mastered her; lest she should scare the vision.

"Baby, will you come to me?" she said, with infinite longing in the tones.

And a sister ran up to her; and she came forward slowly, holding by her frock, and saying the while,—

"Me no baby, me Tottie."

"Tottie, come!"

And Isabel opened her arms; the empty, motherly arms that felt so sadly the want of something to clasp; that groped in dreams for the dear, soft burden, and woke to find its place empty for evermore; she opened them, those longing arms, and the little thing ran forward and nestled there; and they closed on her and held her fast.

And the blue eyes looked trustingly into hers, the little arms clasped her neck; the fresh, sweet lips met hers; and then the voice said,—

“Tottie loves 'oo!”

Love at first sight, again! A mystery, but a great fact. Known to children and those who love them; accepted without doubt or reasoning, like the sun that shines, the flowers that blow. They feel it, they see it, they know it.

So Tottie was installed; and looked upon nurse, when she came to fetch her, with dignified indifference.

And every day the lovely picture in the doorway gladdened Isabel's eyes and heart; only it never tarried after that first day, but hastened to her, and after one loving clasp, sat on a little stool at her feet, content; looking on every thing with gravity and wonder, and speaking never a word, not even when she tired: only putting up her face to be kissed, and then going decorously out of the room.

“The dear little face,” said Isabel, one day, when it was looking at her so, “how I like to see this little face!”

“And Tottie likes to see 'oors!” was the

quick answer, with a loving smile.—And what such simple words may mean, how much they can hold of comfort and of love, let those say who have heard them.

But this was not all her life; only its brightness and its crown.

The teaching was weary work; she felt the constraint and the confinement very much; and the afternoons were greatly worse.

When she had taught at the Parsonage about a week, Mrs. Barford, the doctor's wife, sent to ask her to call on her. Mrs. Brent objected to her going, but yielded to the imperative argument of want of money.

"You know I can't live on £40 a-year, Mrs. Brent; now, can I? So I must do it, whether I like it or not," said Isabel.

"O, ma'am! she's a downright screw, and no lady; as mean as dirt, she is;—and to think of her being mistress over you!"

"Never mind that!" answered Isabel, with a smile, "you know I shall not see her much, it is the children whom I shall have to teach; and I love all children."

"Aye, ma'am, you think so; but you haven't tried all! There's children *and* children. Not

that I know anything against hers, and the father's a kind-hearted body enough; but it stands to reason that with such a mother they'll be noways nice. Why, she'd worrit a angel with her nagging; and nasty, mean ways!"

"They won't hurt me," said Isabel, smiling again, ignorantly, "I will go this afternoon."

"Well, ma'am, I suppose you're right. And there you puzzle me; you, so soft and gentle like, you sticks to anything like a burr! But one thing I *will* say. You're going for money, neither more nor less; mind you get it! If you don't, you'll go for nothing; that's what *she'll* try for, as sure as my name's Martha Brent! And you ought to have £40, the same as for the mornings, not a penny less. And don't you take less, ma'am, now don't! For you want it, and she'll be glad enough to give it, if she can't get you for less, because you teach the parson's children; and well she can afford it! And with that we can manage nicely. There's ten shillings a week for the rooms, and with another ten I can manage your living; happen rather less, but not much; and there's the rest for clothes; for I make nothing of your bit of washing. And clothes

will wear out, though I dare say you don't know it. Now, don't go for less than £40, my dear young lady, *don't*; promise me you won't!"

And in her energy Mrs. Brent came close to Isabel, and laid her hand on her arm, and looked up at her, entreatingly.

Isabel smiled on her. "How good you are to me," she said. "What should I do without you! I promise. I won't go for less than £40."

Mrs. Brent gave a sigh of relief. "Well, that's a blessing, anyhow!" she said. "If you *do* get badgered and worried to death, it won't be for nought!"

And Isabel smiled again; but Mrs. Brent was right, as she found to her cost, and admitted, when she came home wearied, after a long interview.

It was well she had promised, otherwise she would never have withstood the reiterated efforts of Mrs. Barford—a sour, over-dressed woman—who treated her as quite an inferior creature; but would have assented to anything in order to escape momentarily from her vulgar insolence.

“Forty pounds, Mrs. Warfield, for the afternoons! Why, it’s out of the question! The best governesses may be had all day for such a sum as that! I will give you £20.”

But Isabel had promised, and held to her point—held to it even when she was told that she would not be so fresh in the afternoon, and would, therefore, not be worth so much!

And then she was told that it was *too* extravagant! and Mrs. Barford hoped she would at least be punctual to two o’clock, and not let a shower keep her away. And again, “£40 a year for three hours a day! You might at least stay till half past five, for all that money.”

And Isabel yielded gladly; thankful to agree to any thing, and get away; and this seemed so small a thing!

But soon she knew better. When she spent day after day in the same weary round; when, day after day she sat during the long afternoons, shut up with the children and their mother; whose very presence checked their efforts; whose sharp, scolding voice, jarred on every nerve; who lay on her like a nightmare, and paralysed mind and spirit, making her for the

time into a mere teaching machine—how she longed for that lost half hour, which she might have kept if she had only known, which she had lost through her own fault.

And this was her life.

But in the evenings she went home, and dreamed her dreams.

However jaded, tired, stupefied; the cool, quiet cottage; the delicate, cleanly meal; the loving service; always refreshed and roused her to life enough for that.

She dreamed her dreams. Dreams of fair hopes and happy endings.

Sometimes lying on the couch, sometimes walking in the little garden among the flowers, where the murmur of the insects and the hum of the bees mingled with them, and made part of them; sometimes seated in Mrs. Brent's little kitchen, when her voice and herself fitted into them, and made part of them, too; and who little thought that, while she stood with rolled-up sleeves washing cups and saucers, Isabel saw her in a large, airy room, strewn with toys and pictures, holding up a fair child, a boy, whose rich dress was looped with bright blue ribbons, his face turned, and his little arms stretched, towards his mother, Isabel;

while the baby voice cried, "Mamma, Mamma!"

The sweetest sound on earth. A sound she had never heard, should never hear, except in dreams.

Still, every evening, every night, after her hard day's work, she had her reward; always she dreamed her dreams.

And the days grew to weeks, and the weeks to months, while she lived the same life.

Lonely, laborious, hard. Bereft of home and friends, of child and husband. Bereft of wealth, and state and service.

And Mr. Warfield watched it: from hour to hour, from day to day, through Neeke: watched it with his eyes sometimes, when she came home, dragging wearily, with eyes bent to the ground. He knew its meannesses, its miseries: its riches were hidden from him; its riches of use, of hope, of dreams. So, for a while, he was content to wait, solacing himself also with hope—*his* hope; the hope that she must soon break down, and be compelled to live upon his charity. There he had failed. And he wanted it to come to pass through her own weakness, her inability; without help of his. It was bitterness to him to know that she lived and

ate bread which was not his, bread which she earned for herself: he would have liked to fling it to her day by day, as to a dog. He had done the nearest thing he could to that, and she would not pick it up; and he could not make her!

But before long she would. She would tire of this hard service; or, if she did not tire, she was weak; she would fail and fall. She *must* come and eat his bread before she died; or, die for want.

And often, these thoughts in his heart, hidden, he looked upon her; and she shuddered, she knew not why, and looked timidly around to see what evil thing was there.

With all this he found no lover, knew she had no letters, and Neeke was puzzled, and doubted. But Mr. Warfield never doubted, nothing could make him doubt, there was no place in his mind for doubt; he *knew*; he had *seen*.

So, she lived her life; and so, he watched, and waited.

END OF VOL. II.



